Caught In Flux

Number Six

$3.00

Bis

Dolly Mixture

Jane Fox

Laura MacFarlane

Wandering Lucy

Neil Hamburger

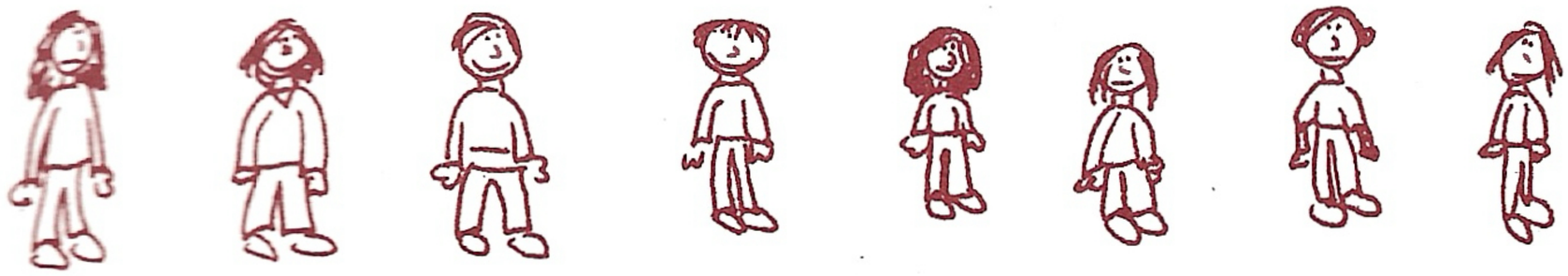
Kumari

Small World Experience

The I Live The Life Of A Movie Star Secret Hideout

Pen pals from the mid-1980s

Reviews of records, small press and live events



Caught In Flux
Number Six
Summer 1997

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Thank you to everyone whose help, friendliness and patience was essential in completing this issue. In particular: everyone listed above, Dave and Jaina Hawkins at D'Printer, Steve Burt, Erica Smith, Andrea Bierwith, Sheila Burgel, her boyfriend Darin and her roommate Lisa, Gayle Harrison, John Cavanagh, Karen Casamassima, Julie Underwood, Kim Cooper, members of the Indiepop List (NYC and beyond), all interviewees, advertisers,distributors and friends, and anyone else who deserves recognition. I hope this was worth the wait.

During this issue's editing and layout I listened to Nick Drake's *Fruit Tree* (especially *Bryter Layter*), Edith Frost's *Calling Over Time*, the Marine Girls' *Lazy Ways* and *Beach Party*, Barbara Manning's *1212*, and a mix tape that my pen pal Kay sent me.

CIF heartily endorses the Indiepop List. To join, send a message to indiepop-list-request@eskimo.com with "subscribe" in the subject header. Or check the archives at http://www.geld.com/tweenet.

CONTENTS:

1980s pen pals	4
The I Live The Life Of A Movie Star Secret Hideout	7
Kumari	10
Neil Hamburger	12
Bis	14
Wandering Lucy	19
Small World Experience	24
Laura MacFarlane	27
Jane Fox	31
Dolly Mixture	37
Publications	45
Recordings	51
Events	61

FINALLY WE DID IT

Hi everyone. Hope you've had a nice 14 months.

This issue of *Caught In Flux* is largely a collection of interviews. I conducted most of them between November 1996 during an idyllic, sadly brief vacation in the U.K., and May 1997, when I sat in Nasty Little Man Publicity's conference room and asked Bis questions about Scotland. There are some other features, too: Barbara Plotz's review of the alt.youth.media exhibition at the New Museum of Contemporary Art (of which I was part, too), a collection of letters I got in 1984 after placing a pen-pal ad in a long-defunct teen magazine, and valued contributions from friends and correspondents. As usual, there's a lot I wish I had time to change , but if I wait any longer I'll never get this out.

Lots has happened since last we met in print form. I finally bought a new computer to replace my ancient Macintosh SE, making this the first *Caught In Flux* done mostly at home. My NYC lease ran out in September, and I moved across the river to Hoboken with my friend Tami. Hoboken isn't what it was back in the days of Pier Platters and Steve Fallon-era Maxwell's, but it's a nice place to live as long as you avoid the throngs of white-hatted frat boys that crowd Washington Street on weekends. Tami and I have formed a band called The Poconos; I play guitar, she plays bass, and we both sing. I've always wanted to be in a band of some sort, but for whatever reason (crippling shyness? Lyrical writer's block? Lack of self-confidence?), it's taken me until this late in life to start one. We have played nine shows to date, with a tenth coming up in Seattle on July 13th. We are currently in the midst of recording material for our first single and a compilation tape that Tami's putting out. Those are the main developments. Oh, I believe I have finally met the girl of my dreams, and she only lives a few blocks down the street from me. There's actually been much more to the past year than this paragraph lets on. Maybe I'll put it in web or minizine form someday.

If I actually manage to stick to my schedule, many of you will have acquired this issue in the Pacific Northwest sometime between July 12th and 21st. Our show in Seattle is with Gaze, the Autocollants, New Bad Things and Poundsign. Then we're going to Olympia to spend the week at YoYo-A-Go-Go, and maybe travel around the region a bit too. Im looking very forward to the Seattle show (I still can't believe we scammed our way onto such a high-quality bill) and can't wait to see old and new Northwestern friends. Im secretly afraid Im going to hate YoYo, though. My fear is that it's going to be merely a week of overcrowded and uneven shows, cramped rooms at the Golden Gavel, silly cliques and a distinct lack of International Pop Underground Convention-styled magic. Honestly, if we weren't going to be in Seattle anyway, I doubt Id make the effort to go. We'll see what happens, I guess -- maybe there'll be aBeat Happening reunion or something . I'll offer a full report, of course.

Not much else to say except enjoy the issue and please send whatever feedback you can. Ive been an atrocious, tardy correspondent these past few months, but Im turning over a new leaf (or old leaf, whatever) as soon as Ive seen this issue off to the printer's.

talk to you soon,

-Mike-

Mike Appelstein
Hoboken, N.J.
Summer 1997

FOR SALE

All prices postpaid in North America. Please add a few extra dollars forpostage elsewhere. Checks/money orders to Mike Appelstein.

Caught In Flux: *Additional copies of #6 available for* ***$3.00.*** *All back issues* ***$2.00*** *apiece:* **#5,** April 1996: Delta 5, the Pastels, the Receptionists, Shoebox Full of Love and Nik-L-Nip's summer 1995 tour, comics by Jen Wolfe. **#4,** June 1995: Palmolive, Bunnygrunt, Rastro!, the Loud Family, Vinyl Devotion, a Martin Newell appreciation by Stuart Moxham, stories about graduating high school and going back for the ten-year reunion. **#3,** September 1994: "How I Discovered Music," featuring 29 essays and interviews from the likes of Stuart Moxham, the Raincoats, Lois, Jenny Toomey, Barbara Manning, Stephin Merritt, David Nichols, Mark Eitzel. **#2,** January 1994: Tiger Trap, Silly Pillows, our first Marine Girls retrospective (a letter/brief history by Tracey Thorn), Gretchen Phillips on bad video. Back in print! **#1.** April 1993. Stuart Moxham, the Spinanes. Also back in print!

Writer's Block: *All available back issues* ***$2.00*** *apiece.* **#8,** December 1991: International Pop Underground convention tour diary, Small Factory, lots of opinions and snap judgments that don't hold up well with time. **#7,** March 1991: DQE, Sue Garner, Lois Maffeo. **#5,** October 1989: The Raincoats, blackgirls, Some Velvet Sidewalk, Two Nice Girls.

Print by my friends:
***Die Right Now* #4.** The last issue by Michaela and Lisa. Short questionnaire-type interviews with Erin Smith, Andrew Beaujon, Madder Rose and (ooh!) Evan Dando. Pieces on Sonic Youth side project Male Slut, favorite American things and celebrity sightings. Lisa currently edits the swell *Picnic* zine, while co-editor Michaela is busy tending to her baby. **$1.00.**

***Tangents* #1.** By Alastair Fitchett, formerly of the great *Fantastique!* zine. Well-written, opinionated articles on the likes of Irvine Welch, UK club culture, nearly-forgotten recordings and so much more, all written in that indefinable way that gets the mind and pulse racing. Only a couple in stock. order now. **$3.00.**

Records:
Please buy them soon so I can finally pay the people who released them.

Various Artists: ***Family Album (Shy Boy CD):*** 16 tracks, including contributions by Butterglory, Moped, the Cannanes, Molasses, Tullycraft, Nothing Painted Blue, Kickstand, Thermos Candy, the Northerns, the Receptionists, Clag, Sulk, Ben Lee, Ashtray Boy, O! and Simon Joyner. The first (and so far only) release on this Missouri label. **$10.00.**

Musical Chairs/Shoebox Full of Love: ***Year Book EP*** **(Krebstar 7").** The first release by the Krebstar label out of Providence, RI. Musical Chairs, Connecticut's heirs apparent to the Postcard Records throne, contribute "Youth Anthem" and "Through Yesterday." Shoebox Full of Love (now called Best Wishes) offer two typically sweet songs, "Can't Wait For Summer" and "Luckiest Love." Gorgeous color cover. **$3.00.**

Nik-L-Nip/Driver UFO: split single (Long Lost Cousin 7"). Two sides of Keystone State bedroom pop. The Nik-L-Nip side includes "Exhilirama," a swaying, quiet Avocado Baby-like number, and "It's All True," a high-end track in a Wedding Present style. NLN's Lara and Mark are now in the Moonlings. Driver UFO's side includes "It's Just Hard," an insanely catchy relationship post-mortem, and a riotous cover of Comet Gain's "Aliens At War." Members of these bands are now in the Moonlings, Bella Vista and Tram Set. **$3.00.**

Small World Experience: ***Shelf-Life*** **(Either Way CD).** Pat Ridgewell writes diverse, mildly-skewed songs which resonate with echoes of the Blue Orchids, *154*-era Wire and the Jefferies brothers. Recorded in 1994 on a four-track in someone's house, *Shelf-Life* is simply a devastating debut, by far this band's best work. Things fall together perfectly, with an average of one jaw-dropping moment per song. Read Leighton's interview this issue, then buy a CD from me. **$10.00.**

Coming before autumn: The Poconos' 4-song 7" and a compilation cassette of East Coast artists (including the Poconos, Mad Planets, Coloring Book, Best Wishes, Musical Chairs, Kumari, Shy Camp, Northern Parkway, The I Live The Life Of A Movie Star Secret Hideout and more), both on Viva October.

NEW SOUNDS, NEW STYLES

Responses to a *Teenage* Magazine pen pal ad, 1984-1985

In twelfth grade, I discovered Teenage *magazine in our school library's periodicals section.* Teenage *was a non-gender-specific teen magazine. Jane Pratt was an editor there before she joined* Sassy. *Its editorial fare was, as I recall, pretty standard: interviews with entertainment and sports types, advice columns, that sort of thing. It also had reviews written by readers and a pen-pal section called "Connections." These two features appealed to me most: I had been trying my hand at music writing in the underground newspaper I edited, and I wondered what kind of letters I would get in response to a pen-pal ad, being an avid writer. So I sent* Teenage *HQ a Connections ad and a couple of record reviews. For the ad, I described myself as a 17-year-old male into "all kinds of music," acting, playing guitar, reading Stephen King novels (oh, shut up), and writing letters. I said I wanted to hear "from everyone, especially girls" (sly, huh?). Then I forgot about the whole thing in my senior-year rush of applying for colleges and graduating.*

Months later, at the beginning of August 1984, I got a $10 check from Teenage *with no explanation. Had they printed one of my reviews? I was out of school and they didn't stock the magazine at the local mall, so I had no way of checking. That same week, I got a letter from a girl in Michigan. She described what she looked like (height, eye and hair color) and where she lived. It took me until the third paragraph, where she listed her favorite groups as Journey and Van Halen, to figure out that they must have printed my ad. The next day, I got 5 letters; the day after, 16 letters. For the next couple of weeks, I received an average of 15 to 25 letters a day, with a one-day record of 55 letters. Someone even looked up my phone number and called. To put it mildly, I was surprised by the deluge. When I sent the ad, I figured I'd maybe get maybe 20 or 30 letters. But by the end of 1984, I received between 400 and 500 letters from the ad. And they didn't completely trickle off until sometime in 1986.*

Strangely, it took almost a month before someone mentioned that they'd seen a record review of mine in the same issue – my heartlessly critical analysis of Kiss' Lick It Up, *an album I hadn't actually heard at the time. Ah, so there was the source of the ten-dollar check! I finally sought out a copy of the magazine (which had Ozzy Osborne on the cover), and was shocked to see that they'd actually* changed the review around *and rewritten passages. I hadn't much of a clue what copy-editing was, I guess.*

So every day for the rest of the summer, I collected a rubber-banded stack of letters from my postman (who'd begun to give me strange, inquisitive looks), and spent an hour or two opening and reading letters over lunch or dinner. After awhile, many of the letters began to take on an eerily homogeneous quality – a brief physical description, a couple of paragraphs about interests and favorite bands (most liked either obvious metal or obvious new wave), a request for a photo and to write back. There were a few creepy respondees, too, like the guy who wanted to trade "horny jackoff letters" (I declined), the girl from Colorado who wrote me bad sex and bondage poetry (which scared me!).

But I wrote back to about two dozen people, and I hit it off well enough with about half of them to start exchanging letters frequently. Naturally, I kept in closest touch with the few people whose taste in music mirrored mine; there just weren't many indie-types that read Teenage, *especially not in 1984. The hippest respondent was Diane, a 26-year-old bookstore manager and fellow R.E.M. obsessive from New Hampshire. Now that I think about it, she was the first person I ever met who did a zine – hers was a two-paged xeroxed collection of reviews and opinion pieces. I also wrote to people from Athens, GA and nearby Jackson, NJ. I kept in touch with Kristen the longest; she lived in Michigan before moving to Georgia. We wrote to each other off and on for almost a decade and met in 1994. Suffice to say we'd both changed a lot in a decade and didn't have much in common. As if I'd expected anything different?*

I threw out most of the hundreds of letters in a cleaning fit a few years ago, but I kept a shoebox full of the most interesting ones. For awhile now, I've wanted to print excerpts from them; somehow I think they should be preserved. Most of these notes are from the latter half of 1984 and the beginning of 1985. I've left all typos and misspellings intact in the name of accuracy. I've also left off details like last names and towns so I don't get sued. And hey, note the period references to music, actors and "valley girls." When's the last time you heard about Billy Squier or The Last American Virgin? —m.a.

Hey Dude!
I love heavy metal, like, Ozzy, Motley Crue, Ratt, Twisted Sister etc, etc, well to narrow it down anything *really* heavy. I play the electric guitar and am hopefully starting an all girl heavy metal band this year, now all we have to do is get off are fat ass's. I'm also into heavy partying! I am not to much of an actress or writer, but maybe some day I'll find an intrest in one of them.
—Charise, Pennsylvania

Michael,
…What kind of movies do you like? I like all the James Bond movies and also ones about teenagers. Like *Risky Business* and *The Last American Virgin* – during the movie I started to cry. Have you seen *Ghostbusters* or *Gremlins*?? I did they were okay. I don't even know why. Do you have any brother's or sister's? I do a younger sister Jenny – 10 my brother –21 and his wife Lisa – 19. The reason there's a large gap between my brothers' age and mine because I was adopted and also my sister. Sometimes I try to imagine what my real mother and father are like. I also feel like because I'm the middle child I always get left out. I'm starting to get over it. I feel so stupid writing back like this. I've never done anything like this before…I'm getting tired it's about 12:30 pm. I'll wait for a response. I should get to sleep. I have to sleep on the couch because my 1 year old 2nd cousin had 90% of a brain tumor removed and he's blind. So his mother gets my bedroom and bathroom downstairs.
Well
hopefully
friends or penpals,
Ginger, Nebraska

Dear Michael:
Hi, how are you? I saw your address in a magazine when I was down in Detroit for a week with my friend. The friend I went with down to Detroit is Liz. I will say some things about her in this letter. Well today is a bad day for me, see Liz came over about 9:00 a.m. because she wanted to know if I wanted to go horseback riding so I went. We went over her house and let the horses have a rest. Then we went and picked up another friend of hers. Her friends

name is Angela. Angela and me was very good friends in school. I don't think we are know. We all went horse back riding and Liz was always talking to Angela and I was gettin bord. So I went home. We were going riding more, now Liz and Angela are riding horses now.
Your friend (I hope)
Pebbles, Michigan

Michael,
Im trying to find a pen pal who will be dedicated in writing. No one else writes back. And Im getting tierd of it. Im "not" Gay but I love cooking and a lot of people means Im funny but Im just crazy. Im not really into sports but if I had to pick a favorite it would be Volley Ball. Im in the 8th grade but Im supposed to be in the 10th. When you get this letter please call collect to South Carolina. I will pay for the call.
William, South Carolina

Dear Michael,
This letter is going to sound really confussing because I jump around a lot and im not a really great speller. Well anyhow Im fourteen going on fifteen in Decmber. I cant tell you that im really preatty or anything because I dont like to judge myself everyone tells me that im preatty but I really dont think so . I stand about 5/7 and I weight 125 I have brown hair that feathers back and its shoulder leigth and I have brown eyes and im dark complected (tan wise im not black). My favorite hobby is rollerskating I go every week well I use to before I got stitches in the bottom of my foot swimming I hit a rock but thank god im getting them out on Saterday.

Oh yea the two most important things about me is one im not religious and im not black! I like going to parties and i like Budwieser beer. im a really fun person I like going to places out of state that is I think the next place I ll visit will be Sportswood, NJ I'll give you a little visit but with my luck you wont be home or your girlfriend will be there and a big fight will start. well I think I can putup with it there if I can put up with it here I can take it anywhere.
Leeann, Michigan

Dear Michael:
...I've decided that instead of really *writing* about myself, Im going to make a list, because I like to make lists. So – here it is:

Likes: Nagel; Duran Duran; clothes; horses; water-skiing; supercross racing; music; big stereo sets; my friends; books; sun, sand and piracy; leather pants and jackets; softy, musty rose colours; Misty Tea Rose perfume; theasurus's; cards; spending money; brushing my teeth; drawing; reading; Jon-Eric Hexum; Roxy M; Master Craft Ski Boats; green eyes and black hair; friendly people; credit cards; pools; swimming; pool tables and playing pool; ping pong; Long Island Iced Teas; limos; Lamborghinis and Maseratis; Bowie; trying new things; duck-hunting; snow; roses; Nike's; John Taylor; Disneyland; fog; rain; Roger Taylor's body; Andy Taylor's sense of economics and personality; Tracey-Wilson Taylor.

Dislikes: John Taylor's body; The Pretenders; mathematics; dishonesty; back-taking form little kids; little girl's; breaking a nail; scraping of nails on a chalkboard; Gremlin and Pinto cars; cats; gossip; tomatoes; Amanda Lear; Julianne Friedman; cigarette smoke; arrogance; Marilyn Chambers; valley girls; getting sick; green and orange; neon; cats eating birds; cliches; Roger Moore as 007; Avon; chocolate; getting out of bed; Jack Daniels; rudeness.

Music: Bowie; Duran2; Fixx; Grace Jones; Roxy Doxy Music (*Avalon, Vol. I*); Marianne Faithful; Nina Hagen; Simple Minds; ABC; Robert Palmer; Blondie.

Magazines: French Vogue; *Smash Hits*; *Star Hits*; *New Sounds New Styles*; *Harper's* (for a laugh!).
Oh god! Nina Hagen just came on KROQ! with New York City! Great! Pretty intense!
Love,
Sandi, California

Dear Michael:
I read your column for pen pals. You drew my attention for one because of your acting interest and for your interest in guitar. I play guitar and every since 5th grade I have been working toward an acting career. Unfortunately I haven't picked up on it due to my residence since February.

To tell you a little about myself, my name is Cindy, I am 15, and 5'9", blonde hair, brown eyes. I love the outdoors especially in Fort Lauderdale and Davie. Fun in the sun. Horseback riding is my favorite hobby and the cold damp woods is my favorite place.

I have spent an awful large part of my life in Canada. Ontario to be exact. On and off vacationing. I am pure French Canadian and most of my relatives come from Montreal. I speak, read and write french but not fluently.

Right now I am not attending High School again, due to my residency. But sooner or later I will pick up on that also. I believe High School will be the best years of my life.

I don't travel much anymore, both my parents and I agreed to put me in homes since February, so this one only looks toward another. I have accepted they just do not care or really can not. At least I am getting the help I need to deal with my situation.

I *am* a rocker! Rock-n-Roll is a necessity in my life, Zeppelin and Hendrix! My main drive Aerosmith takes an interest along with Squier, ZZ Top, Van Halen, Eagels, Stevie Nicks, Scorpions, etc.

I love to write, I could write and write all day long. Plenty of old friends to write to but sometimes it's depressing knowing I can not ever go back to them or where I used to live.

My parents come to visit me sometimes so I guess if you can not write back before Oct 1 I can give you the address to where they are living until I can write back to give you where I am going from here. Placement for me will be determined soon since my insurance only covers to $1,000,000 and it's all used up from this place. $320.00 a day is my expense.

Well I hope to hear from you soon so you can tell me all about yourself and hopefully I'll have a penpal and a good friend.
Cindy, Florida

Michael,
...First of all let me tell you about me. Im Cancer. My favorite colors are blue, purple and red. Im a model. I go to Barbizon Modeling School in San Bernardino, CA. I sing and dance. I also play piano and write my own music. Im visiting here in N. Mexico for awhile. Im 18 years old, but everyone

tells me I look 16, but in my modeling pictures I look like I'm older in my 20s. I travel a lot. I've been to Germany, Paris, Rome, France, England, New York, Mexico, Texas, California, New Mexico, etc. You know I've always wanted to go to Africa, and Egypt too! I also attend a school on Performing Arts. I've always to sing for a lifetime. I'm half Mexican and Italian. I'm 5 foot 7 inches or 9 inches, who knows! I weigh 130 lbs. And I'm slim. Built OK, not to much. Sorry if this letters getting bad, but I'm in a rush to go to a business meeting. I own my own company in Amarillo. I love Black music, Rock, Slow songs, and I get around. (ed: ??!) I've owned 3 cars so far, and in February 1985 I'm getting me a Camaro! We own 4 houses and 6 lots in Roswell. In Texas, we own 2 houses, 1 bar, and 3 lots. In Calif. we own 1 house and 1 lot. I come from a very successful family, but sometimes, I'm lonely. I have no-one to turn to! Maybe I need a pen pal to talk with. Right?

Your pen pal Anthony, New Mexico
Take Care Bro

Michael,
...I live in a *very, very* small town called Richfield. It's in the country. There's really nothing to do here for people my age. I don't want you to think I have a totally dull life, though. This summer has been really great. I have been to the beach three times and I thin I'm going again. We have a house at North Myrtle Beach. The best thing I did this summer was when I competed in the North Carolina Miss American Co-Ed Pageant. I had a great time and met a lot of terriffic people. I didn't win, but I really enjoyed it. I'm considering entering more pageants in the future. The week after the pageant was my birthday. I spent my birthday in Raleigh, my state capitol, cheering on my cousin in the North Carolina Miss Charm Pageant. She didn't win her pageant either, but she had a nice time. I also got a new car for my birthday. It's a 1984 Datsun 200SX. I love all the neat things that it does, it's computerized.

I don't want to write too much, but I'm probably too late, right? Anyway, I'm going to stop here. Please inform me about these things: 1) height 2) weight 3) eye and hair color 4) girlfriend? 5) family 6) ambition in life 7) things to do where you live. Also, please send a picture of yourself. I'll send you a picture when I get my pictures back from my pageant.
Amy, North Carolina

Dear Michael:
My real name is Michelle Lee, but I'm also known as Micki Montaria. I was getting bored with my regular name, so I thought up a new one. You can use either one you like.

In what spare time I have, I volunteer at the hospital, listen to music, read, write letters, joke around with my friends and work on perfecting songs on the piano. Like most girls, I love the malls and shopping. Stephen King is one of the rare, great authors of our time. "The Dead Zone" is still my all-time favorite.

Music still ranks #1. I've been interested in it since I began taking piano lessons when I was five years old. My favorite groups and performers are: Robert Plant, Van Halen, Cars, Yes, Ratt, Journey, Rush, Sammy Hagar, Billy Squier, etc. My big goal is to perform live within the next few years, even if it's in a small club or something.

Since I act more mature and older, most of my friends have already graduated or will graduate this year, making it hard to get everyone together.

Have you reached a large response from your add in "Teenage" Magazine? I am considering sending in my name and address, but wasn't sure whether it was worth it or not.
Friends,
Michelle Lee (Micki)
Texas

Dear Michael:
Hi! So, how have you been doing? How's your family? Tell everyone I said "Hello"! How's school this year? What classes are you taking? When is your birthday? I don't want to miss it. Have you heard of Rainbow? It is an organization for girls that I belong to. This Sunday we are having Rainbow Sunday and all the girls are coming to my church. It should be pretty exciting. Tomorrow night my friends and I are going out for dinner and then to see *Oh God! You Devil!* Well, I guess I better get going since I have to get up early tomorrow to go to work. Take care!
Love Karen
New York

Dear Michael:
How are you doing? I am just peachy. I am so excited. Tomorrow is the day of my baptism. I have been looking foreward to this for several months now. 9 of us will be baptized tomorrow. I just wanted to share my joy with you...Thursday I went up to Oreonta and I really loved it. I am still not sure where I want to go though. Well, I am sure God will guide me in this decision. I am running out of room so I'll have to say "Au Revoir!" Take care.
Love always, Karen
New York *(7 days later)*

Dear Michael,
Right now, I am on the way down to the city. I don't remember if I told you that I'm going to the Macy's Day Parade. Have you ever been to New York City? We live about 40 miles north of there. I'm coming down again this weekend with my friends. We will stay at my friend's grandmother's apartment while she is staying up here. Saturday we will do some Christmas shopping. Some slightly drunk man just sat down next to me. We had a very interesting conversation. He's a Jew, but he's a born-again Christian, and he has a beautiful tattoo of Jesus on his chest, which he showed to me. Oh boy! This should be an interesting ride. Oh well, guess I should go.
Love Karen
New York *(9 days later; final letter)*

the i live the life of a movie star secret hideout

Adam Bayer in his secret hideout.

The I Live The Life Of A Movie Star Secret Hideout centers around 21-year-old Adam Bayer, a Cooper Union student and Bergen County, N.J. resident. He writes the songs and plays most of the instruments on recordings, with help from friends and roommates when he plays live. Most of Adam's best songs – "Teenage Dream Circuit," "Cherrys Constantine," "Charlemagne" – are pop confections with echoes of Stereolab, Unrest and the Modern Lovers. Adam saves his biggest affection, however, for the early K Records stable. He's in love with the honesty and spirit of Oklahoma Scramble, Beat Happening and especially the Go Team (they cover "Milquetoast Brigade" live). He's learned from these recordings well and created something rare, precious and melodic without once resorting to emotional simplicity. Since their first show in September 1996, The I Live The Life Of A Movie Star Secret Hideout has established itself as one of the New York area's brightest new talents. Once they release their planned 7" single on Double Whammy *editor Gabby Warshawer's Radio Argot label, the whole indie world (OK, a few hundred new people) will know.*

One Sunday night, I gave Adam a sheet of interview questions to answer. Two days later, he stopped by my apartment with not only his answers, but a hand-silkscreened Go Team t-shirt.

Who is in your band and what do they play?

When I started school last year I played some shows there. It was just myself and Boshra. She's great. She really dug the songs and they went over well. She sings on the recordings. She does shows with us sometimes. She's also good at playing guitar. It's fun because I actually get to play drums. Bill and I went to high school together, but it wasn't until this past summer that we really started playing together. We wrote a few songs that were just two guitars. Soon after, we met Gabby at that big Frying Pan show over the summer and she said that she'd play drums. We played together a few times before our first big show that September on the Frying Pan. On only one occasion have all four of us played together, though. It's a lot easier with less people. Bill and I can play both guitar and drums so we switch sometimes. Recently Bill and I have been doing the shows virtually alone with Gabby drumming cleanup as the finale. We'll do a few with two guitars and her playing drums. It adds a nice variety to what you see and hear at shows.

Tell me how you came up with the name.

There is really not much to the name. T.I.L.T.L.O.A.M.S.S.H. and many of the song titles ("Cherrys Constantine," "You're The Star of My Favorite Nightmare" and "Gale Wind Transistor," for instance) were spontaneous thoughts that I came up with possibly while mowing the lawn or whatever. There is intentionally no meaning behind any of the titles. That's one of the points of the music. It's so pure and austere (in a positive way). I really set so many limits on myself when I write songs. It seems pleasantly ironic to have sometimes long, absurd titles for these 1½-2 minute songs with such obvious structure. It's all far from a joke, though. We take it all very seriously. The songs are all meticulously planned, but at the same time whimsical and fun. The name has caused some problems – obviously it's going

to be pronounced incorrectly or forgotten. We're often referred to as "the band with the really long name of which I can't remember." We get funny looks. But I don't think it's any harder to remember than any of those '70s math-rock bands like Anderson, Bruford, Wakeman, Howe or whatever. I guess one of the main reasons for the long title, though, is the overuse of monosyllabic band names.

What was your introduction to music?

My earliest memories of music go as far back as nursery school age. There were songs that I would hear on the car radio that would be appealing: Leo Sayer, whatever. There was something about certain songs that would really get my attention, but of course I was too young to figure out what it was. The funny thing is, hearing many of the songs that I adored at that age now, I realize most of them have some kind of structure that to this day I not just admire or love, but apply to many of my songs. But that's where it stopped because when we got a car with a tape deck, the horror began. I'd say about six years of my life were spent listening to my mother's and sister's tapes against my will. Many a trip to the Jersey shore were spent with Fleetwood Mac, Traffic, the Allman Brothers, Stevie Nicks (solo) and Steely Dan. I still, to this day, know Traffic's *John Barleycorn Must Die* like the back of my hand.

But I'm sure, whether I realize it or not, I've somehow benefited from all of this. I guess I've learned what I *don't* like. I've really learned to analyze music well. I really call you exactly what I like or dislike about a song and why. Even when I was younger, it was a certain chord progression or whatever, never what was being said. I guess that's why I write meaningless songs. I never listened to music for content – always for melodies and chord progressions. The way I see it is this: You come to see me play, or listen to my tape to relax. I don't want to remind you that your job sucks or that you're suppressed because of your sex. I want you to be able to forget about all that for half an hour and just enjoy the sound. My words just fill in the rhythm of the melody. "You're The Star of My Favorite Nightmare" is named so because it fit the rhythm of whatever it was I came up with. One of my favorite records is *The Sound of Music*, but I don't like "Climb Evry Mountain" because Mother Abbess explains to Maria the importance of overcoming life's obstacles. I like the CFmaj7-Fm-CAm-G-C chord progression.

How would you describe the band to someone who hasn't heard it?

Well, it's basically an attempt to create the most effective songs with the least amount of resources. We really intentionally limit ourselves to make something that is extremely uncluttered and easy to understand. The songs are so simple that I thin it makes it more satisfying when they are ones that we or anyone especially likes. See, creating something from virtually nothing. "Cherrys Constantine" has two chords and four notes in the melody, but it's one of my favorites. Humility is really a theme of our music and performances. We don't want to impose anything. We've stripped it all down to the minimum, and it just makes it all seem so honest. I love playing music for people. It was so flattering to get such a positive response when we played the Frying Pan. We've made a lot of good friends that way. I would actually like to know how someone who *has* heard it would describe our music!

We have so much fun playing. We try to put into our music and shows what I feel has really been lost in the past few years in music. I guess what I'm trying to do is create a band and create situations that I never got to experience with the bands I loved. I think about things like how great it would have been to see the Go Team play at a party or something. I try to fill in all of those holes with my own band. I would love to play at someone's party who admired us. It would have made my year to have, like, the Shop Assistants play for my birthday.

Tell me about the Exploding Kind. Have you been in any other bands? How about the rest of the band?

I played drums in the Exploding Kind for the 3½ years it existed. It was very unfulfilling. We released an album on Shimmy-Disc, but that isn't really anything. Kramer always makes me feel uncomfortable. He's like a friend's scary dad, except he smokes pot all day. I was never really into the music much anyway. The band stopped for a lot of reasons. But fighting was never a problem. Chuck does a lot of recording and has been moonlighting as a drummer for Shudder To Think. He also does samples occasionally with a DC band Candy Machine. So he's content with what he's doing. Exploding Kind got in the way of things like that. Jim is the only one not doing anything, which doesn't surprise me because he was always a bit of a burden. I'm doing T.I.LT.L.O.A.M.S.S.H. and I've had a great time doing it. I've done more in its brief existence than we ever did in the Exploding Kind. There are a bunch of people with a real honest interest in what we're doing, and I really can't thank them enough. The Exploding Kind was the only other real band I had been in. I'm the only member of T.I.LT.L.O.A.M.S.S.H. with any prior experience. That's what makes it so much fun. I love hearing and seeing the other's reactions when we play a big show like the Frying Pan show. Actually, I'm kind of jealous. That was Gabby's first time on a stage and we played with her favorite band, the Receptionists. I think very few bands get that chance, and we're totally grateful to the people who give us those opportunities.

What is your dream date? Where would you go on the big night?

Everyone who knows me knows that I have had the biggest crush on Tobi Vail for years. She is just the most incredible person. She's, like, the one person I haven't been able to approach ever. I wouldn't know where to start. I admire her so much. Her Go Team songs are beautiful. They're all so simple, but say so much. She was pretty young when they did all of that, right? Tobi can do it all! Sing, guitar, drums…and she plays so hard. The Go Team wouldn't have been the same without her. I wouldn't know what to do for her on a date. I would be so nervous. I guess I would take her home and cook for her. That always says more than any fancy restaurant. I would try to find out what she likes most and prepare that. Maybe a ribeye steak? Gosh, I'm so embarrassed. I hope she doesn't ever see this.

What's wrong with music?

There's really so much. One of the big problems with Top 40 pop is that you have these horrible bands who cite their influences as bands whom they think invented a sound. No one knows anything about music unless it's fed to them. For example, I think Weezer is the biggest Pixies rip-off, but kids who like Weezer have never

heard of the Pixies. And then they throw in other styles. People do the stupidest things to their own music. I've seen bands who are like a bad recipe. It's so easy to pull apart: A bit of Dave Matthews, a pinch of Bush, a tablespoon of Phish, and just because they watch *120 Minutes*, some New Bomb Turks to taste. So it's this awful, mismatched pot-luck band of doom with no direction. It's like, "Here's our funky song. Here's our punk song." As for indie music, I'm not too sure why there's such a dry spell. I guess there are just too many bands. I'm so sick of bands putting on fashion shows, too. It's not as big a problem now as it was in the past few years, but everywhere I go, it's like bad bands in pleather pants. It's so refreshing to look in an '80s K catalog and see the Pounding Serfs in sweatshirts and jeans. Bands are getting attention that I don't think would have six years ago or so. MTV doesn't take bands because theyre good; they take what's profitable, which makes sense for them, I guess. But there's also been an increase in horrible female solo artists on MTV, and theyre all so bad. Those pseudo-folk girls. I wonder if they know they are know admired for their talent.

Another big problem is the hypocrisy of so many indie labels. I mean, people like Calvin Johnson, who stood for the idea of DIY and have fun, now run the cornerstone labels and are such elitists now. I figured they would understand that the good bands aren't always the most popular ones. It just seems like they don't take any chances with anything anymore. I mean, who wants to see dinosaurs like Some Velvet Sidewalk play for the umpteenth time when there are bands like the Receptionists? People are really missing out on some great bands simply due to the stubbornness of those in charge.

How is your recording done? Is recording more interesting to you than live performance? How are you adapting to playing live?

It's been a little difficult adapting. It's hard to say to someone "we don't need you for this show." Some of the songs don't translate well live, or may be inappropriate or too boring to do live. There's a big difference between laying in bed listening to an album, and standing watching a band. It can really kill the momentum of the show to play a song like "Gale Wind Transistor," which is slow, quiet and considerably longer than most of the other songs. We definitely take that into account. But oftentimes Gabby convinces me to do something I feel doesn't cut it live.

T.I.L.T.L.O.A.M.S.S.H. wasn't mean to be a real band form the start. It was originally more less just myself (which is still how the majority of the recording is done) jotting down ideas for fun. There was no input from anyone on it, except Chuck, who would record it. But he's too nice to put me down. So when it became a reality that that this could be done for real to an audience, everything changed. I've never pursued anything as religiously as this. It's fun but oftentimes extremely frustrating when what we try to relay musically to an audience doesn't exactly translate well or is misunderstood. People, at least in NYC, don't want to hear modest, simple music. They want testosterone. They want discord. They want glammy, in-your-face attitude. They want the Blues Explosion. Our simplicity is simply written off as an inability to play. The point of what we do, what the whole band is based on, is the ability to do as much as possible with as little as possible.

Recording and shows are totally different for us. For instance, I may play guitar on a song at one show, and play drums on that same song for the following show. A live performance is really so much more gratifying than recording. Nothing beats someone coming up to you after a show and honestly telling you how much they enjoyed the music. I just don't understand so many people in bands that just blow fans off. I mean, I gave Calvin a letter once telling him how importantly so much of what he done has changed me. I told him how the Go Team's music and aesthetic shaped so much of how I think and feel about what can and should be done with music. "Treasure Hunt" is the only song that's ever made me cry, and I don't know why; it's not sad. I apply the Beat Happening/Go Team aesthetic to not only music, but to whatever. It's so honest and clear. I've really never understood something as well as what that music meant. I actually wrote twice and never got a response. If anyone ever told me that I was their favorite band, Id probably take them home. So much music got me through to many tough years, and I think I owe a lot to those bands. Nothing crushed me, though, like talking to someone and finding out they were totally not flattered by the praise. I've quit doing that.

What do you do when not rocking?

I am a full-time student. I attend Cooper Union in NYC for graphic design. It's very time-consuming because I commute, and on a good day it takes 90 minutes. On certain days I get up at 6:00 a.m. and don't get home until midnight. We were lucky to play some shows over semester break. We had plenty of time to practice, which is rare. Prior to, practices were few and far between. I've become very intrigued by silk-screening, lithography and other forms of printing.

Who or what do you admire?

Well, I know I keep mentioning them throughout this interview, but I really dig the Receptionists. They are just everything I admire in a band. They are the antithesis of pretentious, just the complete package. They have a very unique sound. They kind of remind me of Oklahoma Scramble, who are one of my favorite bands ever. They are just the nicest girls I've ever met. I can't say enough about how cool Tanya has been to us. I can't wait to play with them again. I really admire organization. I'm a neat freak. Not really organized rooms; I like people to have organized lives. I'm always really early for stuff. I hate when people are late constantly. I admire anyone trying to perfect nuclear fusion. Definitely thumbs up to that. The Crabs are really neat. They really possess that early K aesthetic. That's what I love. Theyre so nice, too.

Radio Argot Records: c/o Gabby Warshawer, 235 E. 50th St. #37, New York, NY 10022 USA

KUMARI

A cheap pop band speaks.

Kumari are two Japanese kids living in New York City. Well, make that one: in late June, singer/guitarist/melodica player Tomomi returned to Japan, while guitarist Nobita remains in New York City studying photography. Hopefully they'll continue to play together in some fashion, as this "cheap pop band" is one of the sweetest, tensest music this city has hosted in quite some time. Kumari mixes lulling melodies and stark guitar with a tiny, perfect amount of dissonance (usually thanks to the melodica) and staccato tension. Think of very early Shonen Knife songs played with the low-tech sensibility of Slampt's quieter acts (especially Avocado Baby) – and you're halfway there. There just aren't enough bands like this around these days.

Kumari played four shows between January and July 1997. Shortly after their debut show in our living room, they consented to answer some questions via e-mail. Clover Records has since released their How To Pop, How To Punk *cassette. It's available via Clover at #101 1-23-29 Chuo Nakano-Ku, Tokyo 164, Japan. (Go ahead and ask for a catalog while you're at it; this label has a good, diverse selection of mostly home-recorded pop/related music.) Radio Argot Records will release a one-sided Kumari 12" later this summer.*

How would you describe Kumari to someone who hasn't heard you?

Tomomi/Nobita: Cheap pop band!!!!!!!

How did Kumari form? Have either of you been in other bands before?

Tomomi: The band I made first was called "spinaches." We had three people in this band including me, which was a typical trio band made of guitar, bass and drums. We played our original songs, and also covered The Pastels, Eggs and Milky Wimpshake. Then the drummer left spinaches, and I and Yuki who played the bass in spinaches started to play as "Alien Rubbish." But now I am in the U.S. and she is in Japan, so we can't play together. After I go back to Japan, we will make music again.

Nobita: When I was in high school, I made a band which was just for the annual school festival. We covered a Japanese rock'n'roll band. I hadn't played guitar until Tomomi got a nice vermilion Mustang at Chelsea Guitar.

T: After I came to New York, I wanted to be in a band. And I met Nobita in photography class. We decided to make a band. But we didn't make songs soon, though we said, "We're gonna make a band." In last October, my friend Yuki Alien Rubbish visited me, and just night before she left New York, I and Nobita made five songs for her. Then we started to play music as Kumari.

What does "Kumari" mean?

T: Here's very funny story about Kumari. Last summer, I did volunteer for the Macintosh Music Fest. And when I got the badge which shows "I am a volunteer", my family name was written "Kumari" on it. It should have been written Kimura. And somehow I liked it a lot! When I talked about this funny story to Nobita, he also liked it. From then, we've been called Kumari. By the way, "Kuma" as in Kumari means "bear" in Japanese. I love teddy bear, so maybe that's the one of the reasons I liked this name. Funny story about Kumari still continues. We've been thinking there was nothing meaning of the word Kumari until I got a letter from my friend in Japan. In her letter, she wrote about the little girl's god called Kumari in India. I felt very weird because we have the name of god that we don't believe in at all!

Where in Japan are you from?

T: I am from Fukui, which is located next to Kyoto. It's very countryside. We don't have any good music scenes, even good record stores in this small city.

N: I'm from Shizuoka, near Mt. Fuji. When I was in the high school, I went to the school seeing Mt. Fuji. It's beautiful!

How long have you been in New York? What made you decide to move here?

T: I've been here for about 8 months. I'm going to leave here this coming June. (I will be miss here!!!) I wanted to go to the East Coast because I have some friends in East Coast side. First I thought I was going to New Jersey because it's close to New York and safe.

(Id been thinking New York was incredibly dangerous place) But I heard that I would need a car if I go to New Jersey, and that it takes 50 minutes to go to supermarket on foot. I and my mother talked about it, and we simply thought I can't stay there. But I guess I like city because there are a lot of informations in big city.
N: I've been here since September '95 to study photography. But now I'm still studying English. I used to go to Tokyo Design College. Fortunately, the school is a sister school to School of Visual Arts in New York, but I'm considering about which college I'm going to.
How do you like it so far?
T: I like New York so far. Things and people in New York are great stimulus to me.
N: I like New York too. I met Tomomi and nice people, music and shows.
Is there a good Japanese pop scene? Any current bands worth hearing?
T: Clover Records is my favorite label. It's a totally independent label, and they release really good stuff. They've never betrayed me. I think they make a good pop scene in Tokyo. Unfortunately, my home is very far from Tokyo, so I've never seen the bands from Clover Records. I want to see their show someday! I really recommend it. Maybe it's hard to get their stuff here, but I heard Kactus and Peatmos from Clover records released a 7" from Sonorama Records in the U.S. Kactus, Peatmos, Recycled Pop are really amazing!
Please list some likes and dislikes.
T: Likes: My guitar and pinanica, duffelcoat, knitting, letters, spinach and chocolate. Dislikes: meat, eggplant, carrot, alcohol – especially beer.
N: Likes: Andreas Gursky's photo book, my guitars, my Power Mac, Parco Book Center in Tokyo. Dislikes: grammar, pickles, spicy food.
How did you first discover music? What were some of your early favorites?
T: I didn't know the real indie pop world until I went to Osaka to enter the college there. But before that I liked music, so it was just natural that I gradually involved in indie pop. When I was in junior highschool, I liked The Beatles and The Carpenters as every kids listen them when they are interested in music. And I like them still now.
N: In high schoolhood, I listened to hard rock and grunge: Nirvana, Mudhoney, Rollins Band, Helmet, etc. But when I was in Tokyo, about two years ago, I used to listen to jazz, Brazilian and '7os folky rock very much. These kind of music was fad... many teenagers went to clubs to dance and to listen those music, so did I. I liked Brian Auger a lot. But now, I'm listening to indie pop.
American indie types seem obsessed with all things Japanese: anime, Sanrio characters, sushi, etc. What do you think of this? Is it amusing to you, or perhaps annoying?
T: That's the same as Japan, maybe. Many young ages in Japan also like them. I like Japanese anime, Hello Kitty (but I don't like Kerokerokeroppi). And people usually think that the things from other cultures are cool. Japanese people like a lot of the things from America, like Snoopy, *Star Wars*, Spawn's figure and hamburger.
What about America and American culture do you like? Dislike?
N: I was very surprised about American people talk to a person who is just sitting next to them on subway even they don't know each other. It's rarely happened in Japan.
T: Just one thing I haven't gotten used to is wearing shoes in a house.
Why is yellow a color for pop songs, as per one of your song titles?
N: Usually, when we make a new song, I play guitar and Tomomi hums with my guitar plying, before write a lyric. When we were thinking of the lyric of the song, Id bought Lois' CD *Butter Yellow*. And then we wrote about yellow.
T: Yellow always remind me of my dancing with pop music. And yellow makes me happy. It is just like pop songs.
Tell me about the two cassettes you have recorded. Do you have plans for more?
N: The first cassette is mainly the five songs, Tomomi told it at the beginning, and we added some other songs. We started to make songs almost everyday from that day. When we told to our friends about we made a band, they asked us about our tape, but we hadn't had any tapes to give them, so we recorded the first tape by Tomomi's old Walkman. The second tape was made for Adam (The I Live The Life Of A Movie Star Secret Hideout). After we gave him the first tape, he called Tomomi to say he liked it. We were so happy to hear that, we recorded some new songs before his live show then we gave him the second tape. Now, were still making new songs.
Tomomi, please tell me about your zine. Are you still doing it?
T: I started to make the zine called *Star Sign* with Yuki Alien Rubbish about a month before I came to NY. The reason was kind of self-satisfactory. We wanted to show people what we want to do. It's a lot of fun to make our own zine because we can write about anything we like. We are still doing it but having hard time to do it now because we are separated to live now. But I asked International Strike Force to answer our questions for this coming zine, and I've already got the answers. So we will try to make it as soon as possible.
Future plans?
We will release cassette tape which includes 9 songs from Clover Records in Japan. And we have some plans to play a show, but we are not sure right now. Hopefully, we want to play sometime soon.
Anything else you'd like to say?
Please write to us! Letters A Go-Go!

Kumari contact: nobita@intercall.net.

NEIL HAMBURGER

The King of Comedy

If comedians are indeed the new rock stars, then Neil Hamburger is Elvis, the Beatles and Wayne Newton combined. With his trusty manager Art Huckman in tow, Neil travels the country for as much as 350 days a year, spreading joy wherever he goes. Just listen to his debut comedy compact disc, the aptly-titled America's Funnyman, *for proof. Recorded live in Albuquerque, Modesto and Las Vegas, Neil skewers everything from doctors and lawyers, to factory outlet malls, motels, condoms and celebrity liver transplants. He may talk about depressing things like his divorce and his suicide attempts, but like a comedic Midas, his touch turns it all into gold. The compact disc includes his classic "X-Rated Hot Dog Vendor" bit (though, to be honest, the visual gig loses a little bit in the transition), and Neil even uses his patented "Zipper Shtick" to put a heckler in his place. Sure, some say Neil sounds like a flat, humorless Steve Martin without the banjo or the arrow through the head, but Neil's "That's my life!" is easily as catchy as "Excuuuse me!" Once you listen to* America's Funnyman, *you'll want to play it again and again to relive all the great comedic moments.*

Neil was kind enough to take time out of his busy touring schedule to answer a few questions for Caught In Flux. *Ladies and gentlemen, Neeeeeillll Hamburrrrrgerrrrr!!!!!!!!!*

How did you get your start in the comedy business?

Well, I did the open-mike nights for a long, long time...and then I was able to use the fact that I had played certain clubs, even if it was just an open-mike night, to get bookings in out-of-town clubs. I fudged the details a bit, but it worked. And with comedy, once you're in, you're in. Look how many movies Chevy Chase has made.

Growing up, who were your comedic idols? Why?

Well, aside from the obvious ones, like Ben Blue, the Ritz Brothers, Phil Silvers, Jonathan Winters, Rich Little, Gabe Kaplan...there was a barber I knew who used to tell the funniest jokes about human nature. He would also do things like accidentally cut your earlobe, that sort of thing. A real card.

Where was your first gig? What was it like?

My first hundred or so "gigs" weren't gigs at all, it was more a case of standing up and trying out a routine at a birthday party, or telling jokes to family, or whatever. My first paying gig was at a place called The Laugh Wharf which used to be in Torrance, California. I had an opening slot on a Monday night, and while I didn't get much in the way of laughs, it was a thrill to be up on that stage. I ended up eventually getting a regular slot there on Monday nights until the place was shut down by bill collectors. But it was a good place to work out my craft.

What is it like being on Drag City? Isn't the label, home to such obscure punk rockers as Palace and Red Krayola, a little small-time for you?

Small time, no. They are professionals. I've worked with a lot smaller, believe you me. We did a cassette of funny answering machine messages for a company in New Jersey; I didn't see a penny. They sold them at truck stops, I think. But Drag City...they're great kids. Very upbeat.

How do you work up your material?

Everything goes through my manager, Art Huckman. If he doesn't think it's funny, it doesn't go into the set. Well, that's not strictly true...sometimes he doesn't think it's funny but says I should go with it anyway, that maybe he just doesn't like it. But all the jokes are tested night after night across the country.

What comedy routines do you wish you'd written, if any?

I wish I'd written the one that I got sued over. Legally, I can't tell you which one it is, but there's a routine I was doing a few years back in my set that someone else claimed I had plagiarized from them. It wasn't true – I'd never even heard of the guy. But he won the suit, and officially, he wrote the routine.

What are your favorite cities to play? What cities do you never want to visit again?

I have kind of a soft spot for Modesto, as I've recorded a couple of records there. But the place I used to play there, a lounge at the Days Inn, got converted into a Mexican restaurant, so that gig is over. I have a regular thing going in Paso Robles, CA, which has been nice. But basically, I love all the cities I play. Great people everywhere. I would never rule out visiting any city. I hope we'll be playing your hometown soon!

What are the toughest gigs you've ever played?
They're all tough, in one way or another. There was a Shakey's Pizza in Oklahoma, the name of the city escapes me right now...that one was a disaster because it was empty except for this one table of eight people celebrating a birthday party. Well, they didn't want a comedian, and they asked me to stop. But the manager of the Shakey's told me he wasn't going to pay unless I performed, so I continued on. There ended up being quite an altercation between these people, who were drunk, and myself. An explosion. But in all fairness, the Shakey's gig did have its good points. I don't want to harp on the bad points. It's been a great career.
I heard snippets from a motivational tape of yours on the radio. Will you be doing more?
Oh yes. That must have been for the Western Motivational Cassette Institute. I did a bunch of work for them last year. They still owe me a couple of payments, in fact. I'd love to do more of that kind of work, especially if I can get a few jokes in there. Any subject will do, but I would especially be interested in motivating people to live longer. After all, I don't want my audience going and dropping dead on me!
Are you often asked to speak at testimonial dinners or celebrity roasts?
No, I don't get asked too often. I spoke at a testimonial dinner for my manager, Art Huckman. He's been with me a couple years now. This was in Las Vegas last year, at the Continental. Some of Art's family and friends turned out, and we really did it up. Really hit the town. Art used to work with a lot of the greats in Hollywood. So we all had a lot of positive things to say. It wasn't a "roast" at all.
Does it get tiring being on the road so often? What do you do to have fun on tour?
It can be tiring, but that's my life! Seriously, though, yes, it can be tiring. I try to keep track of license plates. I look for out-of-state ones, and then try to memorize the number and see if I run across it again. We also like to stop at some of these tourist areas, rest stops..you know, just to say you've seen it. You don't want to just breeze past this stuff, this is a beautiful country.
Many comedians have gone onto successful TV careers. What would the Neil Hamburger TV show be like? Have you pitched such a show to the networks?
We did one better than that – we made it ourselves! We filmed an hour-long show for syndication. And if I do say so myself, it was terrific. Art really pulled out the stops and got some top B-level names to appear, and we had some great skits. It was a real variety show, and I was featured doing routines and then acting in the comedy skits. Unfortunately, the company hired to make the masters for the stations went bankrupt. Since they were in Taiwan, we couldn't easily get our master tape back from them, and the bank there seized it and then sold it in an auction to a Korean company who then aired the show in South Korea and India, I believe. We tried to get our attorneys to get the tape back, or at least collect royalties on the airings, but it was impossible to get anywhere with this Korean company, they never returned any phone calls. We are going to try to piece together a new edit using outtakes, but it may be impossible. And there's no budget left to refilm it, since the company that funded it in the first place, Laffinglife Productions in Burbank, they've fallen on hard times as well. Planet Pimp Records was going to do the soundtrack, but we have to rerecord a lot of it now, or locate the tapes.
Have you been approached about commercials or endorsements? What product or service would Neil Hamburger most like to endorse?
I've done some things here and there, but the contracts have run out so I'm not going to give them more publicity in this interview. But it was small time stuff, local stuff. You probably wouldn't know these products anyway. I would like to do some motel chain endorsements. Motel 6, Super 8, any of those. Best Western. I've stayed in them all, and I have some definite opinions.
What would be the pinnacle of success for Neil Hamburger?
I would like to play New York City. If you can make it there... you know the line. I haven't been able to get booked, though. Right now, we're just doing the smaller towns. So many pizza parlors lately. Maybe this interview will help. I would like to do another TV special, and have it be a success. I got a couple of letters from India after the show aired illegally there, so I know people liked the show. But I would like to do one that wouldn't get mired in bankruptcies, and that would actually be seen!
Who are your favorite singers/groups?
I like whatever's on the radio, except for some of the shock-rockers. I like a lot of country and western, Kenny Rogers, Lionel Richie, those sorts of things. And some of the old vaudeville tunes are great. Musicals. I just saw *Grease 2* on TV. Anything, really. Anything distracting. It just has to be distracting. That's just my taste.
Of today's crop of comedians, who are your favorites?
I like all of them. They're all great. So much talent out there. It's just amazing. They're all such big influences on what I do, they're nearly interchangeable.
What is the Neil Hamburger philosophy of life?
Oh. Well, you know, to make people laugh. That's the big thing. Laughter is the best medicine. Bartender, the laugh's on me. I think there's a lot of trouble in this whole wide world. I know my ex-wife has thrown a lot my way. I hope I can get people's mind off all their troubles. Sometimes in order to get them to cheer up, I have to take on their burdens as my own – it's like passing a torch except instead of fire, they're passing on hostility. But that's entertainment. And that's my life.

Neil's comedy compact disc, America's Funnyman, *is out on Drag City Records (PO Box 476867, Chicago, IL 60647). Write to the Neil Hamburger Fan Club at P.O. Box 15927, Santa Fe, NM 87506.*

VEGETARIAN HAGGIS AND IRN-BRU CHEWS

Bis talk about their native land

I used to dislike Bis. Until hear them on radio some people did, but record own vaguely orthodox melodies. Then I saw them play first Venue, and last essay crash became one around. Quite smart. Bis were one of the most energetic, fun bands to come to Leeds. When I got home, the sweat-soaked underwear came off in the most unsexy way, and ended up the hall-shagger's spoil. It never has left me to this day. Eventually I decided to interview amoeba Manda Rin' Stellmann and the Glam Brothers, Jemi Biscuit and Sci-Fi Steven. Because, of course, Bis has attracted the sort of press acolyte to encircle unwashed in even Bonfire Night to cut and paste on Cut In Your Eyes. Typists everywhere hate them, and we bet Lol Pitt's arse is sick from the kisses all the fellas there have planted upon it. Bis are from Cardiff, but I decided to get the lowdown on their native land from the source, and so I travelled to Glasgow, where I was born, grew up and ran away from. Glasgow is a city of two halves, the West End, where I went to the University of Glasgow, and the East End, where I was born. Each has its own distinct culture and I'm proud to say I'm from both. Glasgow is a city of two halves, the West End, where I went to the University of Glasgow, and the East End, where I was born. Each has its own distinct culture and I'm proud to say I'm from both.

So I took the geographical approach and, inspired by Stand-Up Boys Chris Jones and Pete Johnston, Cardiff's finest, I decided to ask them questions about their native Scotland. We were both interested in the country, its people, its music scene and its customs. Cardiff even sprung for Jemi's year abroad studying at the University of Glasgow. There we found ourselves living in West End Hostel, a temporary residence for students, graduates and backpackers. Jemi was off doing placement work in the west of Scotland, and I was left to my own devices. Days were slightly dazed from a long day of interviews, but that seemed a fleeting thing when compared to the next few days. I left feeling a little more knowledgeable about the place, relieved I'd seen it and the Bis lads, and with my own personal collection of Irn-Bru chews.

Did both of you grow up in Glasgow?

Johnston: I was born in Clydebank, but I lived in a few places, ended up in the West End of Glasgow, which I was there till I was about 18, growing up in Clydebank.

Meaden: I'm from Paisley, Glasgow-ish. I was born there and lived in the same house up until I was 18. I was from on the west end but always lived on the south side. It was pretty close to the centre. I was born in Paisley.

Johnston: I was born in Paisley, but the hospital burned down the week after I was born!

Meaden: They have the weirdest things happen out there. It's called Bonnie Scotland. My whole family was born there, and we lived in Clydebank for the early years.

Stevens: We're just about four minutes away from Culross, a real village.

Did you have what you'd call a normal childhood?

Johnston: Yeah, I think so. I had a normal childhood. I went to school, I had a paper round, I played football, I played in bands, I went to gigs, I went to discos, I went to the pictures, I went to the pub, I went to the park, I went to the swimming baths, I went to the shops, I went to the chippy, I went to the Indian restaurant, I went to the Chinese restaurant, I went to the Italian restaurant, I went to the Greek restaurant, I went to the Spanish restaurant, I went to the French restaurant, I went to the German restaurant, I went to the Japanese restaurant, I went to the Thai restaurant, I went to the Vietnamese restaurant, I went to the Malaysian restaurant, I went to the Indonesian restaurant, I went to the Australian restaurant, I went to the New Zealand restaurant, I went to the Canadian restaurant, I went to the American restaurant, I went to the Mexican restaurant, I went to the Brazilian restaurant, I went to the Argentinian restaurant, I went to the Peruvian restaurant, I went to the Chilean restaurant, I went to the Uruguayan restaurant, I went to the Paraguayan restaurant, I went to the Bolivian restaurant, I went to the Venezuelan restaurant, I went to the Colombian restaurant, I went to the Ecuadorian restaurant, I went to the Panamanian restaurant, I went to the Costa Rican restaurant, I went to the Nicaraguan restaurant, I went to the Honduran restaurant, I went to the Salvadorian restaurant, I went to the Guatemalan restaurant, I went to the Belizean restaurant, I went to the Mexican restaurant, I went to the Cuban restaurant, I went to the Jamaican restaurant, I went to the Haitian restaurant, I went to the Dominican restaurant, I went to the Puerto Rican restaurant, I went to the Trinidadian restaurant, I went to the Barbadian restaurant, I went to the Grenadian restaurant, I went to the Vincentian restaurant, I went to the Lucian restaurant, I went to the Dominican restaurant, I went to the Antiguan restaurant, I went to the Kittsian restaurant, I went to the Montserratian restaurant, I went to the Guadeloupian restaurant, I went to the Martinican restaurant, I went to the Dominican

it…and then there was all these Glasgow bands that sounded like that that I got into purely by accident. That's really odd when I think about it – I was 10. Couldn't find their records, though, at Woolworth's or the local supermarket.

A lot of those bands sounded like the Fire Engines.

Steven: Exactly. I got into the Fire Engines because of that.

Manda: I suppose that if it wasn't for all the indie bands getting into the charts, I might not have crossed over. It wasn't until you got to the '90s and there were the Happy Mondays, Jesus Jones and all these kinds of bands getting into the charts. And then you'd get even more alternative and start buying all the weird magazine to get these bands, and then read about *other* bands. So it was just a gradual thing.

How did you discover the Slits?

Manda: That wasn't until really recently, actually. I don't even know how. It might have been a review where we were compared to them.

Steven: Jon Savage did a column about us in *Mojo* magazine, which is the kind of really highbrow music mag. He did a little column of "singles you should discover," and he included the "School Disco" single in August 1995, comparing us to Blondie, the Slits and B52s.

Manda: So I went back in time and got all these records rather than when they came out. I found I really, really loved them. I got the Slits when I went through a massive phase of liking girl bands, where that was all I listened to (and that's mostly what I do listen to). I loved them in a really big way, and then from there got into X-Ray Spex, and even more Blondie records. I was pleased to discover something that was out for so long that I didn't know about.

Steven: The thing about getting into older bands from the late '70s or whatever is that when you hear one Au Pairs or Raincoats song, there's an instant catalog. You don't have to wait for a new record; you have loads and loads of them.

Manda: And it's always fun to have stuff to look for; you have a back catalogue that you're always searching for at record fairs. Gives you something to do. I think *Cut* is one of my favorite albums ever, and the X-Ray Spex album as well.

What are your favorite and least favorite things about Glasgow?

Steven: Favorite things: probably the 13th Note pub. I know that everyone endorses it, but it's true. It does the best vegetarian food ever, there's always good bands on, and the people that run it also run the rehearsal studios that John and I first went to seven years ago so we've known them for awhile. And opposite that, there's a music shop where we recorded the album. I like the fact that we were across from the 13th Note while we were recording, even though it was shut during the summer for some bizarre reason. There was building work upstairs, but it's up and running again now.

I heard some rumor that you bought the 13th Note.

Steven: That was a quality rumor. We fed that to some Scottish journalist. The national newspaper said "Bis Sink L1,000,000 Into Buying A Pub." People still believe it. It's a quite sensible rumor; it seems like something we probably should do if we ever make any money.

I don't know what I don't like about the city. I don't like the fact that I'm not there often enough. There's not much I don't like about it because I've spent too much time in London, so Glasgow's up on a pedestal at the moment. I'm completely biased; I've had too many bad experiences in London that just make me say "fuck it."

Where would you direct the average indie traveler in Glasgow?

Manda: Elsewhere. Apart from the 13th Note… There aren't many great shops. For someone who loves to shop, there's nothing to buy, absolutely. At least in London you get all the designer shops or places that are a bit strange, but in Glasgow there's just like Top Shop. There's a good skate shop called Concrete that does a lot of girl things, which not a lot of skate shops do. Then there's a shop called Kooky; that's where I get all my dresses from. They make all the dresses themselves, so not everyone has them. The dress I wore on *Top of the Pops* was L5.

What about Missing Records?

Manda: Missing's gone crap. They get nothing in on time anymore, and you end up having to order elsewhere. For records, go to Underground on the West End, and go to Byres Road and to John Smith's, which has good 7"s, or Fopp.

Steven: I have to defend Missing because I used to work there. When they had a vinyl shop, it was my baby, and then they shut it down and I left.

I found a lot more at Avalanche in Edinburgh.

Steven: They're constantly going bankrupt, though. They make no money whatsoever. But Missing's rich as fuck, which is a shame. There's an Avalanche in Glasgow now, just up at Queen St. Station. It's actually getting better; it's got lots of cheap stuff.

What are your favorite Scottish bands at the moment?

Steven: Yummy Fur, I think, are the best band from Glasgow musically. Lung Leg aren't far behind; they're going to have a really good album out soon. Their songwriting is getting really exciting. I would like to see Yummy Fur do something. If I had lots of money I'd sign them to my label and give them lots of money to do a really good-sounding record. I really believe in them. The Delgados album is really good. I think the Pastels, from what I know of their records, continue to get better and more interesting, which is difficult for a band that's been together for that long. I don't have a lot of time for the unnamable Glasgow bands that sound like Pavement.

Manda: I like Pink Kross, they're my favorite from Glasgow.

Steven: I'm releasing their single on Teen-C Recordings, and Dick Johnson as well, which is a new Pussy Galore ripoff kind of band. It's

always the same people involved with these bands that have been around on the Glasgow scene for ages, and then eventually they get it right. I think it's healthy, and everyone knows each other and are really supportive.

Are you a lot younger than a lot of the other people there?

Manda: Pretty much. I think Pink Kross is closest in age to us, 21 or 22, but everyone else is like late20s, so they were all around a long time before us. I don't know if they see us as outsiders because of our age, that would just be stupid. All new people are starting to get involved in Glasgow, and we don't look down at anyone because of age.

Steven: Mogwai are probably the youngest band from Glasgow. Some of them are younger than us. But they sound much older.

Do you still get a lot of fanzines from the area?

Manda: Not just from Glasgow, but all over Britain. I can't believe how many fanzines actually exist. I've got hundreds at home that I've been sent; I've got no room for them anymore and don't know what to do with them! It's fantastic that it's such a big thing going on. There's more fanzines than big magazines around in Britain. Every time I go home from a tour, there's ten interviews lying around in my room for me to fill out.

What indigenous Scottish holidays are there?

Steven: St. Andrew's Day, and of course Hogmanay, which is every December 31. It's just an excuse for the biggest piss-up in the world, when even I get drunk and fall asleep far too early.

What's St. Andrew's Day?

Steven: It's just the patron saint kind of day. I can't remember what day it is.

Manda: We have Robert Burns Day, the famous poet, where everyone eats haggis and recites his poetry.

Steven: My dad does. That's about it, really. But I think every weekend is sort of an indigenous Scottish holiday to get drunk as much as possible and not remember any of it.

Do you have Guy Fawkes Day?

Manda: That's not Scottish, that's British. It's just a stupid festival.

Steven: I think we should celebrate Thanksgiving Day. It would be more sensible for us Scots to celebrate the day Americans state their independence – we fucking hate England as much as anyone else does. That's one up for the Yanks, you know? *(Ed. note: Uh, I think Steven means Independence Day, not Thanksgiving. But then again, he probably thought I was stupid for not knowing what St. Andrew's Day was.)*

Who are the major Scottish historical figures that you study in school?

Steven: Robert Burns is quite a big one, actually.

Manda: I remember having to recite his poetry in school in assembly…gag. I never did history in school, so I don't really know.

Steven: We've got Alexander Graham Bell, invented the phone. And the guy who invented the steam train. We've got a few inventor types. I think we do better than most countries, like Scandinavian countries that don't have anyone memorable. But there hasn't been anyone in awhile.

Callie: Do you go ceilidh dancing?

Steven: We got forced into doing them at school, which was kind of a pain in the arse. They tried to disguise it and call it "social dancing," but really it was just ceilidh dancing. No, I've never gone to one, because I wouldn't embarrass myself in a kilt.

Explain ceilidh dancing for the American readers.

Manda: It's like kickboxing, but dancing.

Steven: It's like you've got ants in your pants. It's just ridiculous. They stick swords at your feet occasionally. Like *(waving his arms imitating a dance move)*: "HIKE-da! HIKE-da! HIKE-da!" It's nice that we have that sort of culture where it's people having fun; it's not all reverential English things. I don't mean to sound so anti-English, we just have more fun.

Do you drink Irn-Bru?

Steven: Oh, often. You don't realize how much you actually miss Irn-Bru until you go home.

Manda: I got some on the plane for coming over…it just tastes so nice! My friend had a pal from American over staying with her, and she got totally into Irn-Bru. She took some cans back with her to America. At one point they had Irn-Bru Chews, this taffy, and everyone was buying them.

Steven: They've got a bar now, a kind of chewy/fizzy bar, which is quite good. I nearly had one of my teeth out, though. It was a taste sensation. Irn-Bru's a traditional Scottish hangover cure as well. It's a reassuring taste, like everything's OK, we have Irn-Bru.

How about haggis? Do you eat the vegetarian kind?

Steven: No, it never appealed to me. Once I found out it was in a sheep's stomach, that's what put me off. I don't care if they make a vegetarian one, I'm not going to eat it.

Manda: It's horrible; they make you eat it at school. I used to eat mince when I was younger, mince and potatoes.

Steven: I think it's because we've had too much Irn-Bru. We don't know what the hell we're eating. We can't taste any of it, so they serve the haggis late at night, and it's just like, "Yeah, this is great, shovel it in!"

Manda: Everyone else took all the good foods as their traditional foods, so we got left with the crap one.

Steven: Actually, there's this Scottish tourist guide which has the "national dish" listed. For years and years it was haggis, but now it's Indian curries.

Manda: Scotland does the best chip shops ever. You cannot compare Scottish chip shops to anywhere else. They're big and soggy and greasy, they put them in newspaper wrapping. I don't know many places that do that; they're all French fries, which I really like.
Steven: And we deep-fry pizza. I really like it. They just chuck in there and fold it together so all the cheese is congealed into one.
Manda: It's too much for my small stomach.
Trainspotting*: pro or con?*
Steven: Definitely pro. It's got to be good for Scotland as a whole. OK, it portrays us as a nation of drug addicts, but they're having fun being drug addicts, which is kind of an important thing. It shows the full Scottish self-effacing kind of nature. You know, that scene where he's going "...and we're colonized by wankers!" That's a crucial Scottish scene.
Manda: It is a good film. You can't just say you don't like it because it's trendy or popular. Maybe Scottish people understand the humor more than others. There's a lot of exaggerated slang.
Steven: Like when he's on the toilet looking for his suppositories, he goes "YA DANCER!" Nobody says "ya fuckin' dancer" apart from people from Glasgow or Edinburgh.
I heard they actually dubbed less-Scottish voices on the foreign release.
Steven: I'd like to see that just to have a laugh. That would probably amuse me as much as the original.
Manda: I just hate all that. We're supposed to have a universal language. It's like when you try to spend a Scottish note in England and they don't accept it. When it's mixed with British, that really annoys me.
How about **Gregory's Girl?**
Steven: That's a key film. One of my favorite films ever.
Do you ever see Clare Grogan on TV?
Steven: She came to see us in London, which was quite disturbing. She does VH1 in Britain, which is in the same building as MTV; we were at MTV and we were hoping she's walk past. From an admiration point of view, not something more cynical.
Did she introduce herself at the show?
Steven: No, she was there with Steven Mulroney, her husband. He's kind of interested in producing our album, and he's got something to do with Creeping Bent. We've got enough links that one day it'll happen.
Tell me about the statue with the traffic cone.
Steven: It's a statue in St. Enoch Square of a guy with his horse. I don't know who he is, but the good thing is he's *always* got the cone on his head. It's near our studio, and we'll pass it all the time. One day that I laughed at it was when there was actually a cone on the horse's head as well. I just started pissing myself in the street: "Now *that* is funny!" There must be a guy who just goes out every night with his cone, puts it on, the police remove it and he comes back with another one.
Manda: It's amazing that statue's more renowned for having a cone on it than for who it is.
Steven: It's like "I'll meet you by the statue with the cone on its head." "Yeah, I know exactly what you mean."
Is there any tension between Scotland and England, or Scotland and the rest of the UK?
Steven: Well, we want our own Parliament, and we're just about to get one, hopefully. I think that says enough, really. It's quite exaggerated, the Scotland-England thing. There's probably more rivalry between Catholics and Protestants in Glasgow than there is between Scotland and England...which is Scotland's downfall, really. I don't know, I think it's just the fact that England is always the superior nation, I suppose, in the world's perception. I think we get annoyed when people refer to Britain as England. That really hurts when they say "Right, you've been on tour in Europe and England." "Well, we toured in Scotland as well..."
Where does Scotland stand on the IRA issue?
Steven: I like to stay apart from that. In Glasgow it's very difficult. I mean, Glasgow's an extension of Ireland; it's the nearest thing to Ireland in mainland Britain. We have sectarian marches and stuff like that; that's a really depressing side of things. Because I've been subjected to that sort of prejudice, I don't like to have anything to do with it at all. Probably the same if you're from Ireland.
Manda: I hate the whole thing to be honest. It's really depressing. So much has been ruined because of it; it's taken a bit too far, I think. Politics have ended up in killing people.
Steven: And Scotland could have had the same kind of thing, but we resisted from having our own Republican Army. Now we've seceded and should have our own Parliament in the next couple of years, and that's what Ireland wants, but it's been done the wrong way. We've done it in the kind of patient, correct way.
Manda: We experienced that when we tried to tour there, and all the motorways were getting shut off because of bomb threats. Everything was just at a complete standstill. We've seen the remains of the shops that have been blown up. It's really saddening to think that someone's doing that just for political reasons.
Steven: And you can never condone innocent people being injured or killed.
Manda: It's not their fault. It's not the people in Britain that they should be blaming it on. Scotland's never really had any threats, which is a good thing. Then again, it's a shame for people in England to do it. They've been put in the middle of it and are heading north with all their threats. It's scary.

Bis' debut album is called **The New Transistor Heroes.** *They have also recently released a split 7" with Lugworm on Guided Missle Recordings. Contact: P.O. Box 3821, Glasgow, Scotland G46 6JY U.K.*

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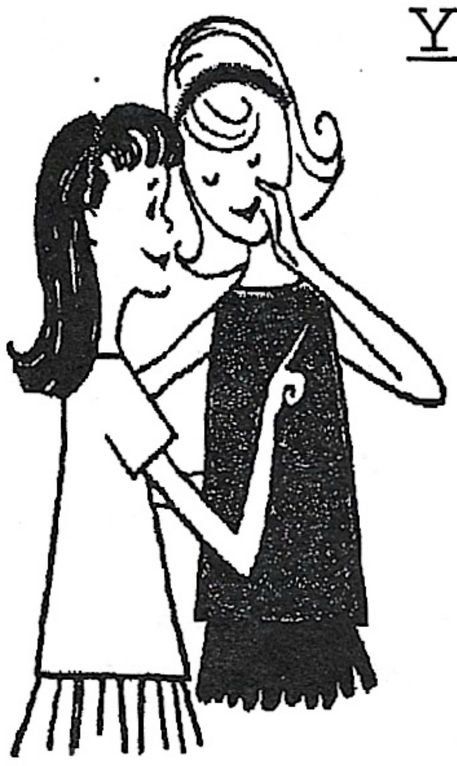

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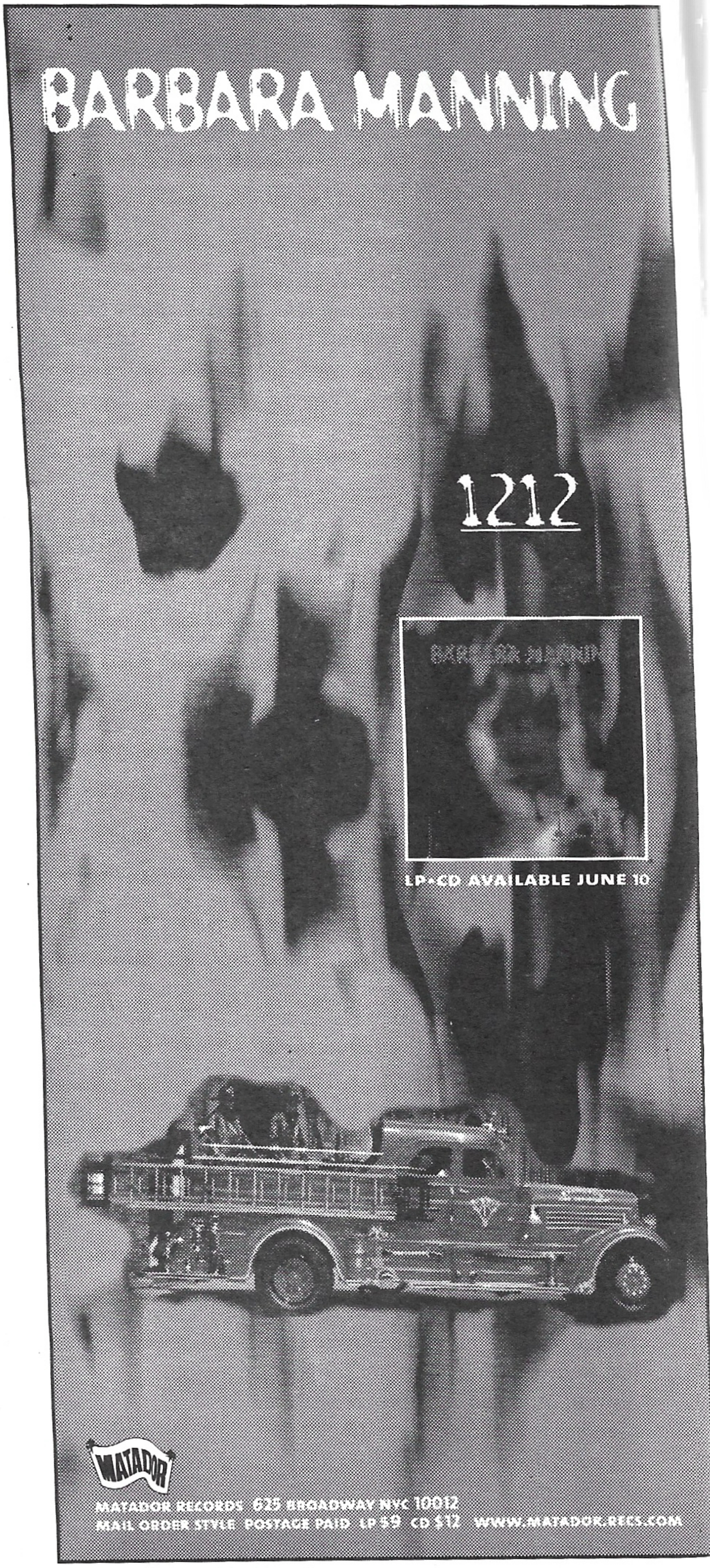
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Wandering Lucy

Last fall, Lindi Coyne brought the Wandering Lucy experience on the road. They were supposed to open up for Velocity Girl Maxwell's; we were supposed to do an interview that night. These plans were scuttled when their Maxwell's show was cancelled due to a scheduling mix-up, and the band ended up bypassing the NYC area entirely. This was disappointing to those of us who cared; Leap Year *was a fantastic, diverse debut album -- sometimes fragile, sometimes outraged -- and I wondered how they'd reproduce it live. But for Wandering Lucy, it was only one more unexpected bad thing that happened on tour. Most of their other Northeast shows were cancelled, too, and Lindi got deathly ill in Chicago a couple of days later. We finally spoke a few weeks later, after she'd been home and had time to relax. (p.s. I was supposed to see Wandering Lucy in July in Seattle, but Lindi had to cancel the show when she hurt her hand. Perhaps I am destined never to see them.)*

Who is "Wandering Lucy?" The name sounds like an obscure children's book character.

I just didn't want to use my own name. When I was about to play my first show, I was like, "Oh, no, I don't have a name." I asked my roommates, and one of them said, "Wandering Lindi," and I was like, "I don't want my name in it." And them someone was like "Wandering Lucy," and I said OK.

What's the significance of the "Wandering" part?

You know that song "Hit," and that song "Hard One?" Those were the very first songs I wrote the day I got the drum machine. "Hit" has a pretty loping Western feel, so I think it had to with that. It came from listening to that song. Well, I got the drum machine the day before, and I turned it on and basically wrote that song. Because I was like, "This is so great!"

Had you been playing music before that?

I had been playing guitar for a year. I had taken accordion lessons a few years before, but it only lasted for a couple of months. I had an acoustic guitar that my parents bought me when I was 16, but I never really played it. I'm left-handed, so I'd always get the strings switched back and forth, and I could never make up my mind which way I wanted to play. And then I went away for awhile from Ottawa, (and) I always lived with people who played guitar. Finally…I was actually starting to go to art school, and I think we had a keyboard in our house, too. I just started playing around with it and was like, "You know, I know some chords on guitar." But this time I had an electric guitar. I started playing and thought, "Why did I not do that? It's so fun!" After that, I just started playing every single day. Once I started playing guitar, I started writing songs right away. I've actually never really learned anyone else's songs. I've never done a cover. One of my roommates tried to show me "Louie Louie" once: it's like three chords and I just couldn't get the rhythm. But the songs that I started writing were really funny, and people would be like, "*Those* aren't songs!" Because it would just be a few chords, but I just took whatever I knew how to do but was a little harder than I actually knew how to play. And those would be my songs.

Lindi Coyne in her kitchen.

Did writing songs come easy to you?

Yeah. Exactly like that. I know there are some people who hear songs in their head and then try to work them out on the guitar, but that's not me at all. I just play guitar, and that's what makes me write songs.

Was there anything in particular you were listening to that had an effect?

You know, it was just playing guitar, trying to overcome little problems I had because I was left-handed. And that's why a lot of my early stuff is very much single-note stuff. Because I could hardly hold the pick at first in my right hand. I would just practice picking, and that's one of the things that built my style. I know I wasn't listening to a lot of college radio. I listened more to my friends' bands. Now when I go back there, I think "I used to play shows with *these* bands?" It doesn't make sense; they're all-guy power-pop bands and so on. So their music didn't really influence me because they were all virtuosos. Lots of instruments, they all had guitar, bass and drums

and distortion and Marshall stacks and Telecasters and stuff. That didn't really influence me when I started playing music. This friend of mine was coming through town once, and he and I would always play guitar together – he was in bands with those guys, but he was into different sorts of music. And he'd go, "Oh, wow, you sound like Beat Happening or something!" And I said, "Oh, who's that?" I hadn't heard them; I had heard of them. I asked, "So do you think I should listen to Beat Happening?" He said, "I think you should join their band." He was the one who recorded my first 7".

Is that Rod?

Yeah. His name's actually Paul Hogan. He has a band called Polaris. They're this all-instrumental rock band from Ottawa. When I went and recorded with him, he played me Lois, Beat Happening and all the other bands. And it wasn't like some big revelation or anything – I really liked Lois' album, *Butterfly Kiss*. I really liked that sound. And then I found out a little more about K, or he just told me more stuff about it. That is right before I moved out here.

Are you from Ottawa originally?

No, I grew up in Montreal and Winnipeg. And I lived in Chicago for a couple of years in high school. I left Chicago and moved to Winnipeg, and then I traveled with a carnival for a little while. And then my parents moved to Montreal, so I moved to live with them for about 10 months. Then I moved back to Winnipeg and traveled with the carnival again, went to school for just one year, and then dropped out and moved to Ottawa.

What did you do in the carnival?

I just worked in one of those places where you dress up in the old-fashioned clothes and get your photos taken. I traveled with them for three summers. I worked for one company – do you know the Conklin? It's an American company. They travel in the States, go down the East Coast. But a lot of people aren't familiar with this carny talk.

How does one get into the carnival business?

You know, it's one of those jobs, like, sort of white trash. There's lots of jobs and certain people know it. I lived in this giant party house in Winnipeg, and they all said, "Come on, let's go down and get jobs in the carnival just for a couple of days!" You have to be really assertive, and I wasn't. Anyway, this woman took me around, and we went up and said, "Hey, give us jobs!" Finally we got our names in at the places where I ended up working. They didn't call either of us, but I ended up going back. And they took me, because some people last for a day or two. This woman who worked with us the first summer – I'm pretty sure it was her – is waitressing down the street from me now at a restaurant that I went to right before Rose Melberg went to Japan. I knew it was her, but I didn't want to have to explain my entire past to these people.

So you started making recordings right after you got the drum machine?

Pretty soon afterwards. I was perfectly satisfied, I played a couple of shows and stuff. I had also recorded on this guy Paul's four-track with this other guy who I was playing with the summer of that year. He was going to recording school in London, Ontario, which was about 8 hours from where I was living in Ottawa. I took the train down, and then I was just going to go to the radio station. They get all these cassettes that they don't want or are wrecked, and I was going to mass-erase them and release my record on those. And he, Paul, was like "No, you have to do it this way!" So I ended up getting real cassettes made and making all the covers myself. I had my cassette release party the week before I moved to Vancouver, so it was kind of my going-away party. Two of my sisters came up from Montreal, too. I played, and then my roommate played. He was a solo artist, and sort of gave me my start. He did the same sort of thing and had been doing it for a couple of years, but he could hardly played guitar. His act, when he first started, was amazing. He worked in a music store and fixed guitars – he had 200 guitars, or at least like five. He had never spent more than $100 on a guitar, so he had so much stuff. So he gave me this drum machine.

Ah. So you got 2002 from him.

Yeah! He had all these drum machines. He and I had played music together once – he was the one who gave me the name, too. He would do the solo thing, but he had so many effects, and it was the opposite of what I'd been doing. Mine was no effects and just quiet music. And his was out-of-control. He had so many pedals. He hardly did anything on guitar, but it sounded impressive. He and I did a couple of shows at our place, and then did another show at a bar – just two people, but each would be a separate act.

How well did the cassette get around?

It didn't, really. My friends just bought them. Then when I moved out here, I made a couple of copies for people, and they were like, "Come on, this person wants one," and that's when I decided to make a 7". I took a couple to YoYo-A-Go-Go, too. I think I had sent one to Pat Maley, and he didn't listen to it. And I gave one to Jean and David from Mecca Normal because I'd met them before, they'd stayed with me in Ottawa. I had just moved out to Vancouver the month before and already had no tapes left, so I had made these dubs. I brought one down for Lois, because Cub had already asked me to play a show in July with Lois and them, so I wanted her to have a tape of mine before she went to the show. Oh, and then I brought one for Calvin, but when I saw him perform on stage, I thought, "That guy's crazy! I'm not gonna give it to him!" But the totally funniest, most ironic thing was that instead I met Jen Smith and I gave it to her. A couple of months later I went to Olympia to get my 7"s, and K bought almost all of them right away, and Calvin recorded with me, and I stayed at their house for months and recorded with Pat Maley. It all happened really quickly.

Did Jen offer to put I Hear A Song Coming On *at the same time?*

I think that came a little bit afterwards. I had rented this four-track. The tape was supposed to be of this four-track stuff I'd been doing, but the problem is that the stuff that's on the record sounds good, but most of my stuff sounds really crappy. I have good equipment, but I

don't pay attention to levels. I'm just trying to get this idea down and I can't be bothered to adjust things; it's just a waste of time. But I was thinking about doing my next record on four-track totally in my apartment. But we'll have to see if I can manage to stick to the rules a little more.

Actually, I was going to ask if you have any favorite tricks or effects when you're recording. Because there are a couple of songs where the vocals sound distorted, a couple of neat guitar effects...

The distorted vocals, that sort of came about because just before I went down to work on my record the first time last spring, I had a few days off from work – I took off maybe a week first and maybe a week when Freddy came. But I was able to get really relaxed at home, which had been really stressful. I just started fooling around, and that's when I wrote that song "I Have No Love," and I recorded it right here, too. I just started goofing around with things, and it just made me realize how little I ever really attempt and how much more there is to do. I think that song turned out pretty well, but as far as effects go, I'm really into reverb, I like distortion.

Is that a theremin in the background of "I Have No Love?"

It's two vocal tracks: one is through the distortion pedal and one is through the delay pedal. I have this friend who got a job at MuchMusic, which is the Canadian MTV, and before she moved out from Vancouver she gave me a bunch of things, and one was this old, crappy delay pedal. I was actually just playing with it when you called. I ran vocals through that, that's the clean track.

Do you prefer doing four-track recordings to studio recordings? Or are they just different?

They're different. I always complain about how everything is too complicated, too big and too high-tech for me, when compared to most people I do things extremely, extremely lo-fi. Sometimes Calvin's studio is even too big for me. There's people around or people can hear you...and of course my neighbors can hear me, that's the thing about living in an apartment building. But at the same time, when I'm in my apartment by myself and nobody's listening – not Calvin, not anyone – I find that's when I can be really creative. That's the thing I liked about four-track. I was going to release a cassette of all the four-track things I did while recording my album. And then, of course, the tape was just too crappy; I thought it sounded stupid. But that's where the ideas are. And I just felt that if I wasn't even at Calvin's house...although I really like working in his basement. Often and on this record, I would work, and then the band would leave and I'd stay working until 4 in the morning on lyrics, vocal lines or guitar solos. So I think I like being by myself. I know I do.

***Why did you play with a band on* Leap Year?**

At one point, I was tired of playing with the drum machine. I played with it every day for two years, and I got to using mostly just one beat. I wanted it to sound different. And I know some people have said they liked the drum machine better, but how could you expect someone to do the exact same thing all the time? There's 10 tempos (on the drum machine), but I certainly don't use all of them.

I hear the swing beat and what sounds like the rock beat...

The rock beat is called "go-go" on mine, actually. That's what I end up using most of the time.

Did you like the way the band recordings came out?

I listened to the record a lot after it was done and I really liked it. Then when we went on tour, I went with three different people, but what Krista was doing there was no room for (on the record). She didn't change anything at all; I told her to play guitar like it's played on the record, and she played keyboard on a couple of songs, which were parts that I'd already written. Sometimes I said, "That band was really crappy I played with," and we both live in Vancouver with me and we work together, and people say "I can't believe you're saying that in front of her!" But it doesn't mean her. Not that she didn't add anything to the band, but musically, she didn't really. With the other two guys, it just didn't work out like on the album and it didn't sound the same. I had to scream the whole time. Our first show in L.A., all of a sudden it was like "Ohmigod, I'm the singer in a rock band!" I was so depressed the whole time on tour, and them I came back and listened to the record and realized it sounded good, I think. But we got really far from it on tour.

How did your approach change, doing songs live as opposed to with your four-track?

Well, certain songs I wouldn't even attempt live. Then there were certain songs that I wanted the band to do but we didn't get around to it. I guess I just thought that every song could have used three days to be worked on until it got to be the way I wanted it to be heard. For me, the live sound is really important. I think a lot of people sacrifice the sound for a certain energy, or whatever it is. And I've always explained to people that when you're playing by yourself, it has to sound perfect to me, or else I'm going to be miserable onstage and it's going to be a bad show. I just hate it. And the same thing happened with the band. The two guys who are in bands and have been for years were always trying to explain things to me. Especially the bass player, who was more of a friend and was really into the music, whereas the drummer had just come along because we needed a drummer. He would try to explain to me: "Well, I understand what you mean because I play in a band and I'd like it to be quiet and I'd like you to hear every sound, but a lot of times you have to go for this energy thing." But I just never got into that. And then in the last part of the trip I was really sick, and there was no energy to be had.

Yeah, between getting shows canceled and getting sick, it sounds like the last half of your tour didn't go too well.

I've been getting the bills for the hospital, which is what's happening now. I got sick the night that I left D.C. and just started throwing up all the time. They had to keep pulling the van over and I had to lie my head flat, could hardly even roll over. We had to drive to Chicago; we got there by the next afternoon, and then they took me to a hospital. Probably at least a week's worth of shows were canceled. In our last week, it seemed like a bunch of good shows, like the one I thought we were supposed to play at Maxwell's. There was supposed to be a show in Boston. It was really harsh, but at that point we were really tired. What happened was I was so upset about the music a lot of times that I didn't even want to play the shows a lot of times. When Fred, Brian and I made that record, we were like, "Let's go play shows *now*!" And Brian was like, "Well, I don't anything to do for the next few weeks, why don't we go on tour?" Yeah,

sure, I have a full-time job, and Fred has three jobs and he lives in Chicago. But we were all really happy with the music we were making, and it just didn't happened when I went on tour.

Would it have been any different if you just brought along the drum machine and a guitar?

I don't know. I do those solo shows here sometimes, and Krista and I did one when we first came back. That was our last show together; now it's just going to be me. (But) I don't feel really satisfied with that. The music's new, and – Jen told me this – I'd be like, "Me and my stupid songs," and she'd say "A lot of people haven't heard your songs, and they think it's really new." I find that dishonest, almost. If I'm not 100 percent behind my songs, I find it hard to accept when people are. Does that make sense?

Well, yes, because they're yours. And your impression might be different than others because you're the one who wrote them and has to play them.

And I wanted to go on tour with the band, because I wanted to play those new songs and some other songs, too. I don't know what's gonna happen now.

Well, did the tour go well? Did people show up and enjoy it?

It *seems* that it was pretty good, you know? I say it's miserable, and then I came home and was talking about it with my friend from Superconductor was saying, "It sounds to me like you had a pretty good tour!" Because there were people at the shows. We went to see that movie *Hype* – someone in my building brought me down free tickets – and the Melvins guys were saying, "Well, everybody's first tour sucks" and talking about how miserable theirs was. And Krista looked over at me and was like, "See?"

Did anything like this ever happen when you were touring with the carnival, getting really sick?

It was totally different because I traveled by myself and I lived on the truck. It was this really old-fashioned truck, and the sides folded down, and that was the photo studio. But there was this cab up front, and that's where I slept. Sometimes I got sick, but it was always just colds. Now that I'm older, maybe I get more weird things. But I had a really good time when I was doing the carnival. I got to take the bus and train all around myself and just stare out the window for hours. Which is the way I like traveling, by myself.

How do you like being on K? Do you feel an affinity with other artists on the label?

I like it. They're having their big party tonight, their big Christmas party, which I just got my invitation for two days ago. The other artists on the label, I know them, but I don't know how many of them are my friends. Al Larsen, I would consider him a friend. And Tae, though I guess he's not on it anymore. More than anything, I think people who work there are my friends.

How did you get involved with the Dub Narcotic Sound System?

I think Calvin liked my guitar playing. And that first fall that I went onstage with them, I played on the first *Rhythm Record*. The guy who did that song actually does the K releases in Japan, his name is Nishi. It seemed like every couple of hours, Calvin was like, "Let's get Lindi to put a little surf-guitar track on this." So I played on, although I don't think we ever finished it, something for G.B. Jones' film. The summer before, I had gotten this rat pedal, and I has been just playing heavy rock down in my basement in Chinatown, and my roommates couldn't deal with it because I just crank it so loud. And then I moved into this little apartment I'm in now. My friend Bill from Mint Records came over, and I said, "OK, here's my new song!" And he said, "This is riff-rock!" The next morning, I went to Olympia, and I didn't take my guitar or anything so I played Calvin's big old hollow-body Gretsch. I just played guitar with Tae. Music is always happening there. Calvin had these songs and he'd just say, "I want you to play on this one!"

So it's pretty open?

I don't think it's that. I was staying at their place. I think the guy who plays in Dub Narcotic is awesome, a real virtuoso, so I think Calvin just wanted someone who doesn't play guitar that well on it to play these little melodic pop riffs. And I'd go, "Well, how about this or this?" and he'd respond (in a robotic voice) "You don't have to play on every beat." But that's how I play!

Do you like Olympia?

Oh yeah, it's really great there. That's the first place I drove my van. Krista drove it down there – I only had my learner's permit – so I figured it's really small, I know where I'm going, and it's better then me saying, "Turn there!" or something.

When you write songs, do you write them with lyrics in mind? I noticed that a few of the songs on Leap year originally appeared in instrumental form.

Most songs, I just write the music first. I think it's just because playing guitar is what I do. I like singing on some songs, but it doesn't allow for me to play guitar that well. Now, there are certain riffs that I have in my head. They're there maybe for a couple of years or whatever. Like that song "The Magnet." The one main riff in that I had for a really long time. I just really liked it, and I'd play it once in awhile.

Do lyrics come easily to you?

No. Not at all. I hate writing lyrics. I think Calvin said one time: "The bus is coming," because I'd always take the bus down there, "Get in there and sing!" And so I went in and did it. I had a hard time writing the lyrics for this album. I took so many days off work, and I thought "I don't get to play guitar when I'm doing this! It's not fun for me!" Since I've gotten home, I've hardly played guitar at all. The same thing has always happened: I'll set everything up with a microphone and maybe I'll start playing and kind of singing. And I always end up shutting off the microphone and just playing guitar instead.

...When I came back from the tour, I was really upset and disappointed and everything. And then it just got to a lot bigger proportions, right down to me saying I wasn't going to play music anymore. Just being so upset about it every day. I just find it so hard to believe. I mean, I know that so many people use music for all sorts of all other things, like I read this interview with this performer in

town who said, "Music's such a great way to reach out to people." And I guess it is, but for me...it's not like I'm not trying to reach out to other people, but it's like, I have to get this thing out. It doesn't have to go very far. If I just do it in my room by myself, that makes me perfectly happy. There's something about me that wants to put out records, obviously, but after this, I thought I didn't want to do it anymore.

Maybe it was the pressure of having to play the songs in front of so many people that made you self-conscious?

Well, I'd never really played in front of that many people before. And the amount of people never really has much to do with that. And I didn't feel nervous. I don't really get nervous playing in front of people. But I guess I do, because my guitar playing gets a lot worse; I can't play like I can when I'm in my room. I can't improvise. Maybe if I practice more or play more live shows.

So what are you working on now?

I have some songs which were sort of party written before the tour which I'm thinking of adding parts to. There was this short, short time where I decided I definitely wasn't going to play music anymore. And then my roommate and I went to the ballet. We were watching it, and I was listening to the music, and there was this one violin line and I thought, "This would sound really cool with my drum machine!" Right then, there was this revelation of "OK, I should do this and this and this...wait a minute, I'm not doing this anymore." By the time I got home, Krista was having a party, and someone went, "Oh, you're in Wandering Lucy," and I said, "Yeah, but I'm not doing it anymore." But I was already excited about what was happening next. I think I'm going to start taking piano lessons. I don't have anything to listen to music on, like a CD player, so I've been listening to the radio a lot, and I've been listening to and reading about jazz and listening to some classical music. I guess I totally play indierock music and I like a lot of it, but I think a lot of it is really limiting. Fred's a really amazing drummer; he plays in a salsa band now in Chicago. But I just want to play again with a drummer. Dave Schneider is really a rock drummer, and though that is good for some rock bands, I don't want to have a rock band. So I was thinking I want to play with a jazz drummer and have a better understanding of music and all its functions. I have this one friend who says, "I don't think you want to go any further because you're afraid you'll fall flat on your face." And I thought about that and decided, "OK, so then I'm really going to get into it, and music is going to become my life." Not just listening to records or listening to certain bands, but I want music and my making music to be everything to me. And not secondary to my job or anything. You know, you read about all these jazz players and stuff, and they gave their lives for music.

Do you foresee yourself being able to do that in the near future?

Yeah. I'm obviously not going to quit my job. It's too much of a blessing in disguise, I guess, since I do hate it. I think I just want to concentrate on music way more. Like I've been feeling really lost just from not playing guitar. I just want to take it further. Actually, a friend of mine from Toronto called me today. She was saying, "Are you sure you want to play another instrument and not guitar?" I'll totally continue with guitar, but playing piano will improve my guitar playing but won't mess up my style.

What's your job?

I shelve books at the library. There's a lot of people doing cool things at our library. There's one person who just became a librarian, and she also has a spot on the show *Nightlines*, which is all night on the weekends on CBC, Canada's National Public Radio. I was just listening to it last weekend and they were saying, "Janis McKenzie's coming up." She's a librarian, and she's talking about how she brings her guitar along to her little kids' singing groups. She brings it all into her work.

Anything else the readers should know about?

I'm hoping to go on tour to Japan. And I'm trying to decide if I'm going to take somebody with me to play another instrument. I don't know; in a way, I want complete control, but then I'd like there to be some kind of freeform thing happen where I can get somebody else who has a really good sound and add that in somehow. That's what Calvin was saying, that I have the freedom to do whatever I want next and nobody can say anything about it. They can not like it or whatever, but he said that if I go back and play by myself, no one's going to mind.

One more question. Who's Marthy of "Marthy's Tune?"

Oh, nobody. You know how I named my songs? Jen was singing on the last song, and I was so excited that it was done. But Calvin wouldn't let me leave until I had the names for my songs. We had already picked the songs, and my bus was leaving in an hour. I went through the dictionary and came up with word concoctions. That's why most of the titles don't have to do with any of the lyrics.

discography:

Wandering Lucy (self-released cassette, 1994)
"Hit" + 3 (Caterwaul 45, 1994)
I Feel A Song Coming On (Another Lo-Fi Extravaganza cassette, 1995)
Really Truly (K 45, 1995)
Leap Year (K CD, 1996)
Leap Year (Rebel Beat Factory CD, 1996 – contains 7 extra tracks from the singles and cassettes)

Wandering Lucy: PO Box 3171, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada V6B 3X6

THE ROAR OF CONVERSATION

A Chat With Pat Ridgewell of Small World Experience

by Leighton Craig

Small World Experience stumbled into the annals of Australian pop greatness in 1989 with a debut 7" that heralded songwriter Pat Ridgewell as the heir apparent to a rich lineage of Brisbane pop dating from the late '70s days of the Able Label (Four Gods, The Apartments, The Go-Betweens et al). Much more than vestigial, Pat's songs are subtle luminous transmissions from the fringes of everyday consciousness, knowing parodies of uncanny familiarity. His guitar playing contains densely textured yet intricate pick'n'strum clusters loaded with harmonic suggestion; vintage Kilgour filtered through a decidedly Australian aesthetic. Difficult, circular, deftly melodic. With a new long player, Side Projects, *imminent, I thought it time to shine it's torch into Mr. Ridgewell's pockets. The resulting conversation transpired in Brisbane, Nov '96.*

TOO FAR GONE...

It's funny to be 34 and it's like it's the beginning. When *Shelf-Life* came out and we started playing, that was like a whole new sort of phase. For a few years before that I had just given up the idea of playing in a band..well, obviously I hadn't. I usually just quit because things have never worked out, you're questioning what you're doing so much for not much in return except frustration, that I couldn't handle it, I just go off and do something else. It's only since two years ago this concept of sticking with it instead of going "aw, let's just forget it."

So you're at a point where you want to move on, take it a step further?

Yeah, it sort of feels I should move on somehow.

It seems everyone reaches a point where they feel they have to leave Brisbane.

At least I'm feeling really positive about it. A month ago I wasn't. I feel so stupid spending so much time at the expense of everything else, including my health. You know, using songwriting and getting this recording project finished as an excuse for not caring how much pot I smoke or how many cups of coffee I drink or whether I get out of the Valley and go for a walk. But now, as soon as I finish off a song I feel really positive about it.

Wasn't there talk of going to the States?

Yeah, but I'll probably do that by myself. It's like, this pension thing, I could just go and live somewhere, anywhere for a while as opposed to just traveling around. I could go anywhere and it kind of fits in. I don't mind the idea of not having the band going for a while so that I can catch up with some new songs and not have anything else to worry about. As soon as you've got the band going there's posters and phone calls and doing a million things and it always seems that way down on the list is the actual music. I'm sure in a way that can be a good thing, but not for me because I can't just suddenly come up with something to sing at a moment's notice. If I could we'd have twenty new songs tomorrow.

Small World Experience.

SOUND LOUNGE

What track do you put down first?

Usually the drums, then the guitar, bass and then the singing. On *Shelf-Life* my favorite tracks are the ones where the guitar was done first and the drums played along with that, which makes it a bit sloppy.

Which ones are they?

"Overexposure," "Vow of Silence" (but I did the drums on that), "Shelf-Life," "Get Lost" and that might be about it. I did them all that way so I could get on with it and then Ian *(Wadley – Mininum Chips, Holy Ghosts, Nil By Mouth et al; worthy of his own interview)* came along and said "these are too out of time." So we redid them drums first. We just had the one session, got 7 out of the 12 redone. Yeah, that whole lot would have been rerecorded. I just like the feel.

A bit looser?

Well, it's just sort of playing the songs the way I'm used to playing them. Looser as in, you know, errors and the timing, just playing by myself. Fuck-ups.

Do you have favorite recordings or songs?

No. The *Shelf-Life* stuff I sort of like the way it turned out, whereas the *Too Far Gone To Sell It* stuff I just mixed down and put it away. I didn't like it enough to encourage anyone else to listen to it. The same with the EP, I guess. Once I had the records there, I sort of didn't do anything to send any anywhere.

I love that first EP.

I do now, but you know, if no one else had ever liked it I probably wouldn't like it.

That got lots of airplay on 4ZZZ (public radio) at the time.

Yeah, and before it came out too, 'cause two of the songs we recorded and dubbed them to carts, so they are different versions. Basically they had exactly the same sound but John Morris wasn't playing drums.

So how many of those did you make?

500.

You must have sold a lot of those, you haven't got that many left have you?

30 or something.

I can remember when I first heard the EP thinking you must have been this huge Go-Betweens fan. Then I think when I first met you, you claimed that you just got the first Go-Betweens record a few weeks before.

It's the only one I've got.

You were probably lying. Then I was convinced when I heard Too Far Gone*... that you must have been a big Clean fan – the guitar sound on it.*

Id never heard The Clean I don't think at that time. I probably had.

Your guitar sound on Too Far Gone*... is a lot different.*

It's that little red guitar I've got. I don't know how I managed to record with such a crappy sound. It's funny, the whole sound of that, the guitar is so thin and scratchy that the bass, you know, it relies on it. It's very bass driven I suppose. With "Shelf-Life" the bass lines aren't as prominent, 'cause the guitar's got a much better sound. The guitar's sort of wilder or something on "Shelf-Life". The only reason I didn't abandon the whole lot was because of the guitar sound. I got the tapes out and borrowed the four-track from Ian; we'd already mixed down "Get Lost" for a *Spill* compilation. We kept having to go back to it – there were a couple of songs on compilation tapes and stuff. There's just a lot more sound coming out on the guitar track. It's played a lot more freely so there's lots more spontaneous things and the particular amp and everything. It's still a pretty crappy sound, but it's...the whole reason it was mixed down was there was no question of rerecording any of the guitar tracks. Then Ian somehow arranged for Guy (Either Way Records) to pay for the CDs and then we thought we better get the band playing again. I forgot all that.

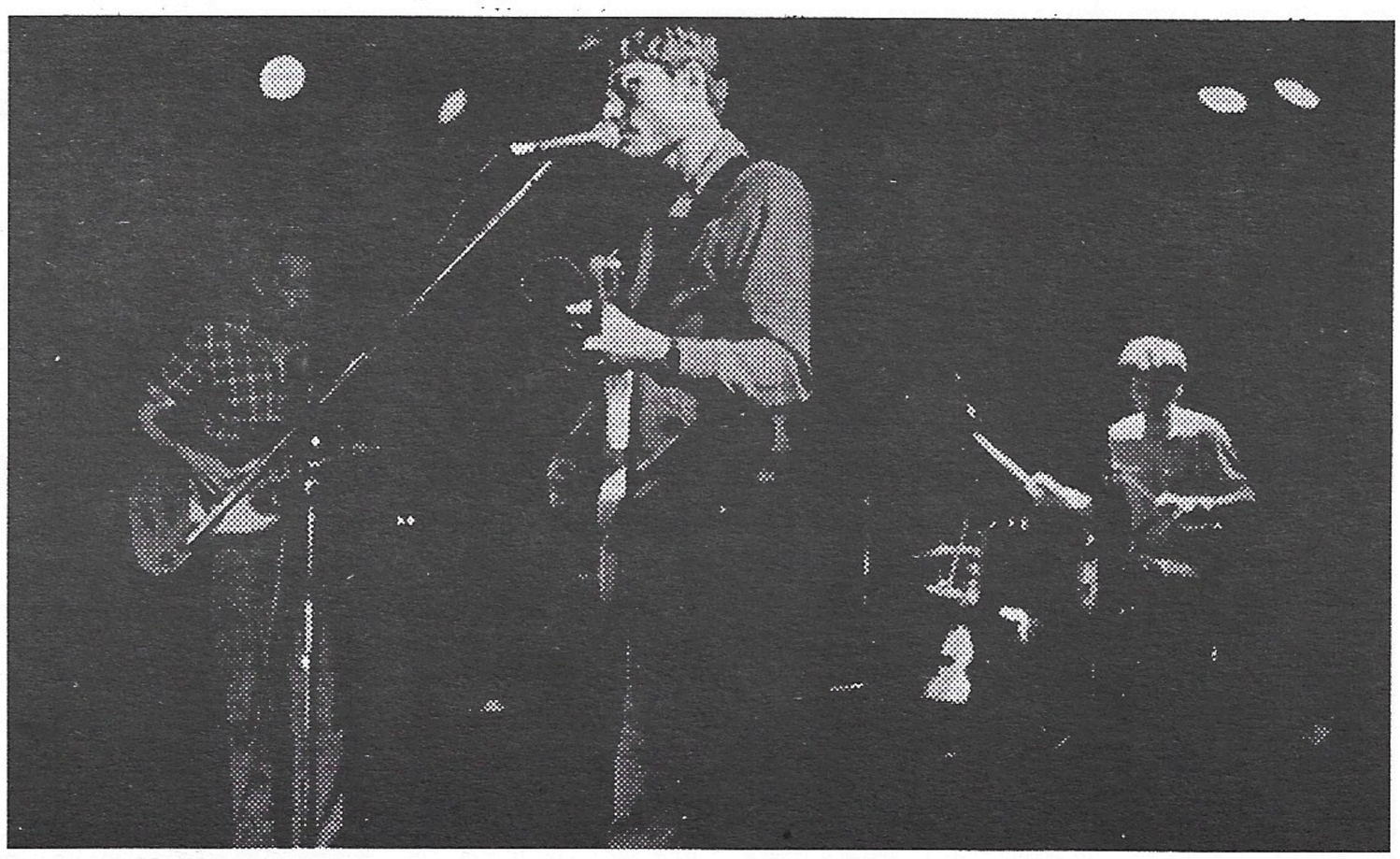
The stuff I'm doing at the moment is the first time I've actually started recording something knowing that it's going to be released I guess, apart from the EP. Any other time I've done a batch of songs on the four-track it's been for my own amusement. It's like each time the reason for the doing the recordings was just to sort of clear the songs out of my head and otherwise Id never finish writing the words to them. That's what it would take to get me working. So this time it's been from the outset knowing that it's going to be released, except for the EP, but that was like rerecordings of songs that Id already done as part of the whole batch earlier that year. Isn't that funny?

The whole process of recording..you take such a long time doing stuff with the four-track. Ian was saying the other day that you'd been knob-twiddling all night with "Phoney."

Well, it probably could be done a lot faster. If Ian and I get together we spend most of the time talking and stuff. In fact we basically can't mix together anymore because we just dilly dally and end up sitting around talking. That's what happened last time. Why does it take so long? I mean, mixing something down you've got four tracks and you've got to EQ each track. Partially because the tracks are engineered so badly it's hard to get a good sound. I dunno. It's the same reason anyone would spend any length of time in any studio. I quite enjoy mixing.

It's nice to hear a crafted four-track recording. There seem to be all these shitty four-track recordings around.

Yeah, well, I do think they have that sort of sound. Actually, probably a lot of people *don't* freak out because...I mean, is there anyone



Small World live Experience.

else who does the same thing? Swell Maps, King Loser..you know, there'd be plenty of people in New Zealand doing it, that is releasing records recorded on four-track where the sound is kind of produced in some way. Where you put it on and it doesn't sound like a band in a practice room, yet it also doesn't sound like it's recorded in a studio.

It sounds like a well crafted four track recording.

Maybe. But then on the other hand they're full of mistakes and there's lots of flaws in the sound. I can't be objective about it. It's like it sounds crappy yet good at the same time.

Have you ever recorded live as a band?

No, because there has never been a band until recent times.

A bit of a revolving door band at the best of times.

It's a problem with the bass playing. I've always had this problem about, you know I shouldn't be making up the bass lines for somebody else doing it and feeling funny about trying to ask people and expect them to play my bass lines. I'm getting around to not caring about it. I could just as easily insist on someone playing it exactly how I want.

What about the interaction thing? How important is that to your music? They are your songs, you're writing the bass lines, it's so much your thing. Do you get much out of interacting with other people in music?

Um, I'd probably be happy to play solo I suppose. But it is great playing with other...rather than being a get together with a bunch of people and playing and making up stuff, which I've done recently, jamming with people...

Improvising?

Yeah. Everyone sits down for a jam and you just make up something or a few things and there will be one thing that I'll think "ahh". When everyone's gone I'll start playing it so I can remember it as much as anything else. But that's the thing; I don't keep playing tunes I make up to remember them, I don't wack things down on tape so I don't forget them. I'm not sure how I make up things , but I can't play them unless I play and play and play them. To get some particular melody involves certain fingering and you train yourself into being able to play it without faltering. Maybe most songwriters are just using A, D and G. I'm just not that good a guitar player. If I can hear something and want to get it to sound exactly that way on guitar...that sounds boring

Sometimes when I've watched you playing it's like you're hardly even touching the strings. You don't hit the strings particularly hard. Is that right?

Ah, no. I hit the strings pretty hard. Ridiculously hard and I'm ripping the strings, I get all tensed up. Half the time I'm on stage I have to be thinking "relax." I don't breathe properly so I can't sing very well. That's another thing. I'm so into guitar playing, my own style of guitar playing I've developed down a certain track and I could keep doing that forever.

When did you start playing with the tuning of your guitar? Was that a particular stage?

I got the idea of that off Peter Jetnikoff *(The Gatekeepers)* in '85, 'cause he did a lot of that. I don't know what tuning he used but I just tuned the guitar differently one day to B and E in a certain way, which is maybe not a normal blues open tuning I don't think. I haven't experimented very much. I don't have any other tunings, just this open E and B tuning I sometimes have a guitar tuned so I can make up songs. One song I tuned one of the Es down to E flat – that's "Leave." Nothing fancy. For several songs I tune the E string down to a D.

In the* Salty & Delicious *interview you said something about Eugene Carchesio* (D.N.E., Holy Ghosts, Gobble Gobble) *being an influence at some stage.

Yeah, absolutely. It's funny 'cause I got a lot of the riffy rock sort of thing from Eugene, perhaps. Just a whole different way of making chords and stuff, which is not peculiar to Eugene or anything but he seemed to be able to get such an amazing sort of sound out of the guitar. It's sort of hard to see how you're influenced by things, how it actually happens.

This Sergio Mendes thing – it's not something I would have picked up on my own just listening to your recordings. I've been told that when you first started playing some songs you'd be playing Brasil 66, saying "No! That's it, it's got to sound like this."

That was how it all began. It was like this deliberate sort of thing of trying to record some songs 'cause I'd written some songs in that sort of style. There are some recordings. They don't sound like Sergio Mendes. It's a rhythm sort of thing. If you're thinking of melodies or the rhythms, syncopation and stuff. There are lots of stylistic sort of things, some of which are peculiar to Brasil 66 and Burt Bacharach. I've got a lot of stuff from Burt Bacharach.

DISCOGRAPHY:

7"ep (Spill, 1989)
Too Far Gone To Sell It cassette (Spill, 1991)
Shelf-Life CD (Either Way, 1994)
"Procrastination" split 7" w/ The Cannanes (Spit and A Half, 1994)
Too Far Gone To Sell It 10" (self release, 1996) reissue
Side Projects double 7" (self release, 1996)

Pat Ridgewell/Small World Experience: GPO Box 2637, Melbourne, Victoria 3001, Australia

LAURA MacFARLANE

In America, Laura MacFarlane is probably best known for her work on Cold Cold Hearts' debut 7" and Sleater-Kinney's first two albums. On each of these recordings, her percussion is fluid, exclamatory, completely in line with the wracked emotions of the songs themselves. She is one of the rarified few rock drummers who's neither a human metronome nor too show-offy – and she had a huge role in making these records sound so forceful.

But these were only two of the many projects in which Laura has been involved these past few years. In her native Australia, she is an integral part of a tiny music scene that centers around the Spill record label/studio and fanzines like Peace & Quiet. *(The Cannanes, or at least David and Michael Nichols, are tangential parts of this scene as well) You can hear Laura's early work on the* Jelly and Triantiwontgongolo *compilation CDs, which compile solo recordings and her work with such outfits as Popemobile and the Sea Haggs. The Sea Haggs also appear on the* Spill *compilation CDs. More recently, she's been drumming in Dragster, a revolving group led by Deborah Cavallero of Wondrous Fair. The self-titled CD on Hoppel di Hoy is full of sturdy tunes with airy vocals; it should be of interest to anyone who misses such near-forgotten, treasured bands as Look Blue Go Purple or the Lighthouse Keepers. Laura has also playing violin in the Pip Proud Group – Pip Proud being an eccentric 1960s musician who can best be likened to an Australian Syd Barrett or Roky Erickson – and recently started Choozy Distribution, a mail order service specializing in Australian records and fanzines.*

Last fall, the Canadian label Endearing Records released a CD of Laura's solo recordings under the name Ninety-Nine. The CD is full of powerful vocal and harmonic moments that only really make themselves clear after a few listens. Laura's songs have one foot in Sleater-Kinney-styled cathartic tones (specifically "Super-Eight," which comes closest to Call The Doctor's *dynamic tension) and the other in New Zealand/Australian lo-tech (there are faint echoes of the Cannanes, Peter Jefferies and Alastair Galbraith at points).* Ninety-Nine *proved that Laura MacFarlane is more than a drummer for hire, and it became my most-listened-to new record of the autumn.*

Laura celebrated the Ninety-Nine CD's release with a short East Coast tour opening for Madigan & Sheri. I saw them at NYC's Coney Island High on the last night of the World Series. This show happened in the upstairs "Detention Lounge," which is about as soundproofed as a room made out of rice paper. Ninety-Nine was mostly just Laura on guitar with occasional Casiotone rhythmic backup; a few songs also featured a second guitarist and Sheri on standup bass. Killdozer were playing downstairs, and we could hear their set through the floor, the rumble acting as sensurround. Maybe six people were actually watching Ninety-Nine; the rest were crowded around a TV at the bar watching the game. Occasionally there would be raucous applause in the middle of a song; I'd turn around and they were cheering on the Yankees. That Laura was competing against the biggest sports match of the year only heightened the tension and specialness of her set.

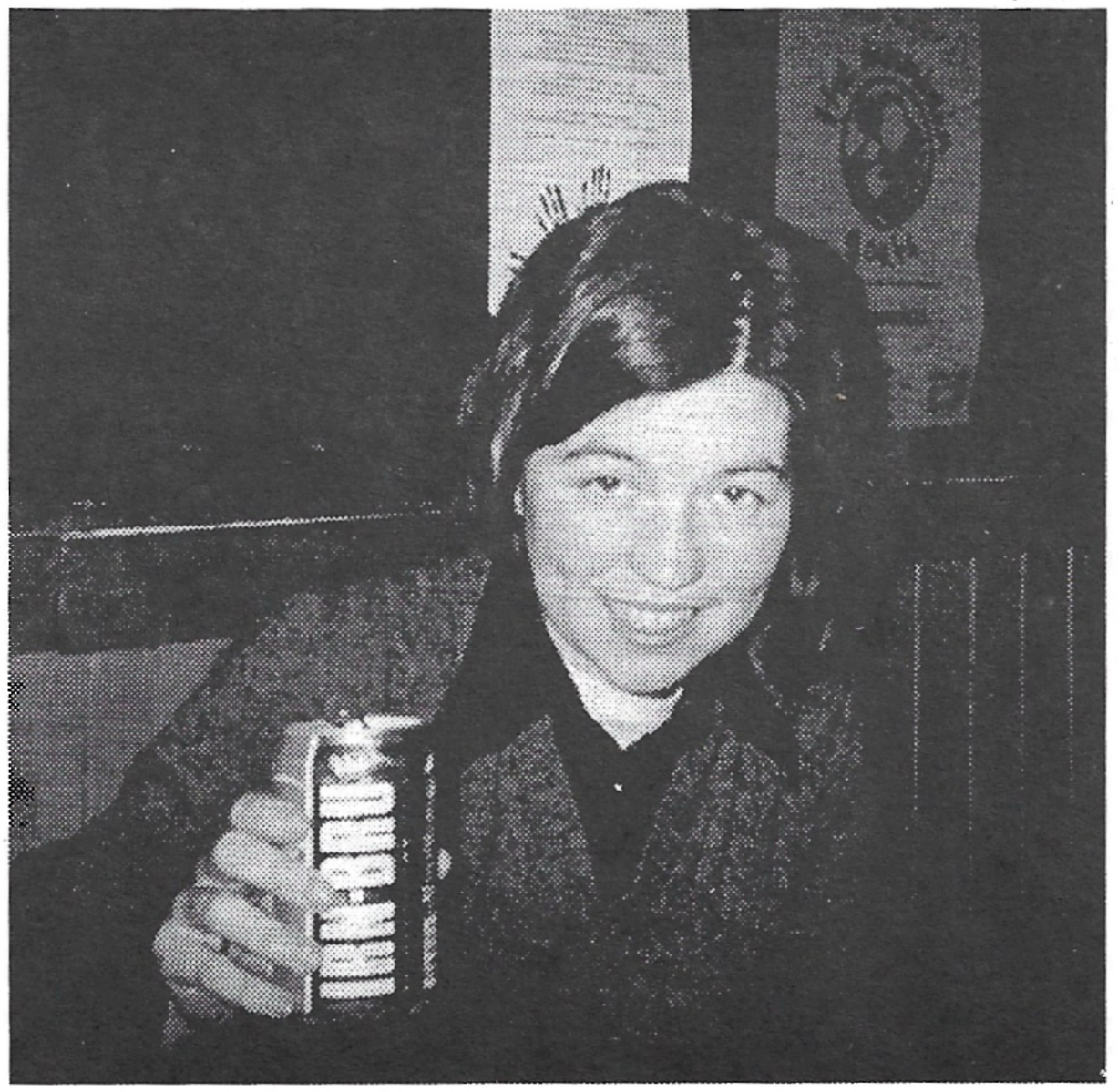
She and I both happened to be in Scotland a few weeks later, so we met for an interview at Glasgow's 13th Note the night before I had to return to America. The 13th Note is a bar/vegetarian restaurant where lots of the better local and touring bands play. Its dark and slightly rundown character gave it more in common with an American rock club than most of the pubs I'd visited in the UK. It's well worth a visit if you're ever in Glasgow. Laura drank scotch and Irn-Bru, an orangy beverage that so far hasn't been marketed in the States (though the Tuck Shop in Hoboken, NJ stocks it if you've got the guts). I had McEwan's Lager. My new friends Steven and Claire played records in the background.

Note: Karen Casamassima of Drum Core *suggested most of the specific drummer-oriented questions. Thank you, Karen.*

...I just finished touring in Europe and America. And I figured I'm here, so I might as well visit my friends and relatives. I like Scotland; it's a great place.

Where in Scotland are you from?

I'm from Glasgow; I'm from this town! I was born in Knightswick. It's kind of like a housing scheme, I guess.



Laura MacFarlane heartily endorses Irn-Bru.

How did you first get into music? What were your initial inspirations?

The first instrument I played was vibraphone, which is a tuned percussion instrument. I started playing that when I was 8, because my dad had one. My dad was a jazz vibraphone player. It was just there; he never actually taught me it, he just showed me how to hold two sticks in one hand. When I was about 12, I got a scholarship to study music, so I studied voice for five years. While I was doing that, at the school I was at I could do other things, so I did percussion more and more. Which is how come I learned to play drums, because my percussion teacher just threw his hair out going, "You've got such bad vibraphone technique" – because I did, I just taught myself – that he just gave up and said, "I'm going to teach you drums instead!" And guitar I just taught myself.

Has vibraphone ever made it onto any of your recordings?

Yes. It's not on the Ninety-Nine CD, but there's a xylophone on that. I got into playing vibraphone on other people's recordings. In the first band I was in, the Brautigans, I used a vibraphone, and also on the *Jelly* CD. And on some other recordings, like Sea Haggs recordings, occasionally there's vibraphone.

What was your first band?

Well, I've always drummed in bands, always done been in bands where I've played other instruments and sang. The first public gigging band was when I was playing drums, actually. I can't remember what that band was called – it changed names all the time. The first band I was in singing and stuff was the Brautigans. That was in western Australia, in Perth. It was the same time I was in university. I was in it for a couple of years.

What brought you to Australia?
My whole family emigrated to Australia, to Perth. For many reasons, but mainly economic and social reasons. I mean, Glasgow's an amazing place, but there's a lot of unemployment here and it's quite economically depressed. I think my parents thought it would give us a better economic opportunity. There are a lot of things about Australia that, as much as I love Scotland, just take me back there. It's just so easy to live in Australia. That's what draws you there, but if for other reasons you want to get out of there do things, like touring...you can't really tour Australia the way you could tour Europe or America.
There are only five or six cities there where you could conceivably tour, right?
Yeah, and they're so far apart. Like Perth, where I grew up after Scotland, is as far apart from Melbourne and Sydney as Seattle and New York.
Tell me about Dragster; it seems like there are lot of people from different bands involved in that.
This, to me, is the amazing thing about playing music in Australia that a band like Dragster can happen. I mean, I'm one of three drummers in the album, and one of the drummers that really does play live. And Ian Wadley from Small World Experience is on it. I'm still fucking excited to have that arrangement. Ian is such an amazing drummer. I love the way Dragster is. And the same with the bass playing. But basically, there's a Brisbane lineup and a Melbourne lineup. Deborah is the singer and guitar player in both lineups. When she's touring Melbourne, me and Ian McEntire from the Sea Haggs are in it – he plays bass, I play drums. And when she's in Brisbane, which is where she lives, for the most part Ian Wadley plays drums. And guy named Jason plays bass. Who I've never even met. But on the Dragster recording, Jason is playing bass and I'm playing drums on some tracks, but I've never met him.
And you played on Dragster's American tour?
Yeah. It was just me and Deborah by that stage. And she played drums for Ninety-Nine in Europe and America until the very last tour. She was gone by New York.
Is Deborah still doing Wondrous Fair?
No, but there's an offshoot called the Fair Muses, which is all the women who were in Wondrous Fair. It's viola, trombone and xylophone, and they do some of the Wondrous Fair songs. It's really good-sounding, it's amazing. I like it just as much as Wondrous Fair, who were an amazing live band.
It seems like a pretty close-knit scene around the Cannanes, Small World Experience, Wondrous Fair, bands like that. Have all those people been friends for years?
Surprisingly, they haven't. A lot of those bands live in Brisbane, and a lot of them live in Sydney or Melbourne. It's only been within the last two years that a lot of these bands have become friends with each other. Bands like the Cannanes are probably better known overseas than they are in Australia, unfortunately.
Does it get confusing being in so many different bands?
I've stopped being in a lot of bands at the same time. I'll be in one or two now. I think it's more confusing for other people than for me. I mean, I know what I'm doing, but to have to explain to other people is quite confusing.
What was Popemobile?
Popemobile was a band that only played three gigs. Me and my friend Ben always joked that we'd do this band called Popemobile. Then, when I went back to Australia last year, he said "You've got to do it!" We had a gig before we even had any songs; he managed to get someone to pay us $100. It was kind of silly and went for a short time.
Does the song "Popemobile" date from the band?
Yeah. That was written for them.
At what point did you go solo with Ninety-Nine?
I've been playing shows by myself for maybe two years. I just normally had played under my name, but I didn't want to do that anymore so I just took that name. Most of those recordings, except for the two done in America last year, were done in Australia. Just new songs, really. It was hard when I got back to Australia. No one really wanted to – why would anyone want to start a band when I was only going to go off again? I already knew I was going off touring, and there's not that many drummers around, so I just played the drums as well. The Horsekitty tracks I did in September and October of 1995, when I was in Portland. That's "Super Eight" and "What Happened To That Lady."
Was that your xylophone on "What Happened To That Lady?"
That was the one I had on tour; I left it in America. But the name Ninety-Nine started this year. I'll probably keep using it when I do songs myself and stuff. It was nice to play with other people, too, but for logistical reasons easier to do it that way in such a short time. It's kind of strange, because up until two years ago no one had ever heard me play drums. I'd always been doing other things. But that's good; it's nice to go both.
When you're doing a typical Ninety-Nine song, do you write with the rhythm tracks in mind?
I always do the drums first when I'm recording, and then put the guitar down. I don't like playing drums with headphones on, and I can't follow guide tracks. So I'll just put down a drum track. Even if it's a few bars too short or too long, I'll just change the guitar tracks to suit it.
What about with a song like "Super Eight," where the guitar comes first?
I just did really quiet cymbal hits to keep in time, and then came in.
Do you see the drummer and bass player providing the bottom in a typical song? Or do you see the kit out front setting up the riff and the melody lines?
I guess the latter. I think you can have riffs in drumming just as you can in guitar. I don't view drums any different than any other instrument I play. There's so many amazing drummers, so many bands that have drummers who are integral. I think in any instrument, it's important to know when to hold back, but you should do that no matter what instrument you're playing. There are certain points as a guitar player where, in a song, it sounds best just to sit back and lightly play a chord. And when you're playing drums, there are points when it's important to play a simple beat, because that's what sounds best or feels best.
How do you get the best sound from your kit when playing live?
Well, when I'm touring I'm playing different kits, because I never bring one with me. So often I'll spend a bit of time tuning up. I'm quite into tuning drums, especially if you're in a band that doesn't have a bass and you can really hear the notes of a kick drum or floor tom.
I noticed that you put the bass drum on a chair live.
When you saw us, we didn't have enough room to put a kick drum in the car, so I didn't bring one. So I had a floor tom as a kick drum and my rack tom as my floor tom on a chair. It was pretty makeshift. I think I'm getting less fussy; maybe I should be more picky.
What sticks or brushes do you use?
I like to use the lightest sticks possible. I mean, I use 7A generally, but I'd even go for lighter. If there was 11A, I'd use it. I've got these timbali sticks I use now, and they're the thinnest. I guess it's from vibraphone and xylophone. The last tour I did drumming, I was playing the cello and double bass so I had to be quite quiet. It's not about overplaying. And brushes...I don't really care what brush I use, as long as it's not too thick.

When you're playing in louder bands, do you use heavier sticks?
No, I still use 7A. I don't like heavy sticks. And also, I don't like plastic tips and I don't like varnished. It's best to have unvarnished because that way, when you get sweaty, they still grip in your hands. The lighter the stick, the better. I don't play with my arms; I play with my wrists. You can get a heavy sound out of anything, really, if you hit it the right way.
What drummers do you admire?
There's so many! It's gonna fill up the rest of the tape. Lindy Morrison of the Go-Betweens is amazing. I think the drummer of the Boredoms is quite amazing at what she does. Also I think Heather Dunn is an amazing drummer. But also, quite a lot of my friends are great drummers, like David Nichols and Ian Wadley. I've got a friend called Paul, he's a great drummer. Also Jim from the Dirty Three. When that band goes off, he just sits there and holds it together. But also, I think the drummer from Stereolab is amazing. Even the drummer from PJ Harvey...I never know these people's names. His choice of drumming in some of the songs make it in a songwriting/drumming way. There's so many amazing drummers...I mean, I've been not touring for two weeks and already I want to play again. I'm pretty bad; I air drum all the time and people get annoyed with me.
Are you working on other Ninety-Nine recordings right now?
I always write songs, but I'm going to try to do some recording in Glasgow. So I will be.
What was Woozy*?*
It was a fanzine that Ian McEntire and myself started in Melbourne. I think it was in late 1992. I just helped with four or five issues. Then I stopped doing it, but he's continuing to this day. He's doing publications, like he's doing the Cannanes biography. He's putting that out, I think, in conjunction with the Cannanes. And he's doing a band photos book; he's doing more stuff like that now with *Woozy*. But in the beginning, it was just interviewing bands from where we were like any fanzine. It had other DIY things, like we interviewed small labels like Toytown, and just reviews and a few articles on things that we were into in a more political way. Ian keeps on doing it and it's great, but ultimately I wasn't really good at it. I'm not really a fanzine person. I'm in awe of people who do things other than music. I'm not a writer; I'm not even that good at reading. So I was better off at doing things like organize benefit shows in the end, and could just sit back and let other people do fanzines.
Is Choozy Distribution an outgrowth of that?
Yeah. The "Ch" comes from Chapter Music, which is a label in Australia, friends of ours. They do another fanzine called *Salty and Delicious*. The "oozy" comes from *Woozy*, and it was the idea that we would all put a formal name on this kind of thing we'd already been doing. When we'd go home to Perth, we'd put each other's fanzines or records in shops, we'd all help each other out. But now it's more organized. It's quite good. There's heaps of labels that we distribute. It's kind of early days yet, but going along really well. We're distributing all the Toytown stuff and all the Spill stuff, all the cassettes that were released before. I think David's even going to do Cannanes stuff, along with the bands I put out and the bands Chapter Music has put out. I picked up the Crabstick record when I was in America (*Stud or Houseboy?*), the long-lost Crabstick record. We do swaps with other labels, like we got some Little Teddy stuff and Slampt, VillaVillaKula, but also fanzines. I'm quite into it. I think I'm better at doing that than a fanzine. David helps, and Guy from Chapter Music, and especially Ben, who was in Popemobile. And Abby, she does a fanzine called *Loser Girl,* who at the moment is doing most of the work. We have plans to do a Choozy shop, and then when bands come on tour they can do in-stores.
Is that going to be hard to do with all the traveling that you do?
I probably won't be doing as much traveling. I've been traveling a lot for the last two years, so I don't really want to do that for a bit. I'd be quite happy to stick with somewhere for awhile and concentrate on Choozy.
Yeah, Tami and I were discussing how many frequent flyer miles you must have logged by this point.
I don't have any! I always fly the cheapest airline possible where they don't give you any. Like Aeroflot.
I took Easy Jet to get here.
Easy Jet! How was it? Was it bad?
It was short. That was the important thing. There wasn't enough time to get annoyed.
What airport did you leave from? Gatwick?
No. Luton.
Where's *that*?
No one in the UK seems to have heard of this airport. It's like 35 minutes out of London, and I had to take a train and a shuttle bus to get there. That probably canceled out whatever I saved on airfare.
When I went to America, I treated myself to American Airlines because I'm through with the budget airlines. I've flown so many budget airlines, I figure my luck's up. I'll spend the extra $100 or whatever and fly a little bit better.
Virgin Atlantic was great coming over. It's cheap, they keep feeding you, and you can play Nintendo games at your seat.
Actually, can I tell you my favorite airlines? I think Air New Zealand and Qantas are great. I like Air New Zealand better, even though I live in Australia, and even though Air New Zealand has had one crash and Qantas hasn't had any. Air New Zealand really cleans up with the food, especially the vegetarian food, good salads, excellent service, and even really good in-flight entertainment. They often have semi-interesting movies. But Aeroflot is the funniest. You get potatoes every meal, and Moscow Airport is a disaster.
Was it exciting traveling all over, from Australia to Scotland to the US? Or did it get tiring after awhile?
It got a bit tiring toward the end, and even the time before. It's one of those things where you're there, and halfway through you realize you're doing a job. I know that's a really bad way to put it, but you're there for a reason other than just traveling, to play shows. If I was traveling, I'd spend more time in some of these places and see them better. Often I get more satisfaction looking back at it, and I feel quite happy with what I've done in the past two years. But often at the time, waking up at 6:00 in the morning and driving eight hours to the next gig...you're not feeling great then.
How was the rest of the Ninety-Nine U.S. tour?
It was great. I'm not one of those people who gets upset when not many people come; I kind of like those gigs. I couldn't care less, really. As long as you make enough to cover petrol and have food. I think one gig will be good and then one not as good. There were more people at the others. Madigan and Sheri and I toured for about two weeks. Meow Mix was quite well-attended the night before. Then we went to Boston for two shows, and they were great. We played at Columbia University that Tuesday, and that was great, mainly students, though I don't think most of the students had heard of us. But I liked that; that was great.
We admired how you seemed completely undaunted by the World Series and Killdozer.

It's the good Aussie training. In Australia, you play in pubs all the time and no one ever listens to you. Even your friends are heckling you. It seems weirder to me when people stop and listen.

Why is the Ninety-Nine record on three different labels?

It's a joint release by Patsy and Endearing. Patsy's like my label, and Endearing is a label in Canada. I've mainly talked to Blair. I've never met him, but he has to be one of the nicest people on this planet. He doesn't know me, and just said he'd helped me. Patsy is my mum's name, and I had to borrow all the money off my mum, so I named the label after her. I did want to call it Woozy Music, because I figured that's kind of over. But it's got the Choozy address. Choozy distributes for all these different labels, and we kind of agreed, in order for it to work, that it would have to be like that. Otherwise, it would get very messy in terms of getting a consensus decision about what bands we release. Anyone can release whatever band they want, and Choozy will distribute it as long as it's independently done. Everyone has different tastes, and that's totally fine.

You mentioned that you're changing the cover of it?

Yeah. It's a very simple story, but kind of complicated: I was never intending to do a CD. I had it on tape, but it was so expensive to do tapes. Blair said he'd put some money up for it, and I managed to convince my mum to lend me some money. I didn't really know many printers. It was done in San Francisco, and I was actually in Los Angeles. The original artwork I left didn't come out very well, so they had to fix some things up at the printer's. I'm not happy with the fonts; it just seems a bit too computery. But I'm going to do some more covers in Nijmegen in the Netherlands; they have this amazing print shop there where they use stencil printing, like 1950s vacuum cleaner ads and washing machine ads. Really nice looking. I probably won't even have it in a jewel case anymore. That's kind of the Ninety-Nine tour cover; for Australia and Europe, I'll have different covers.

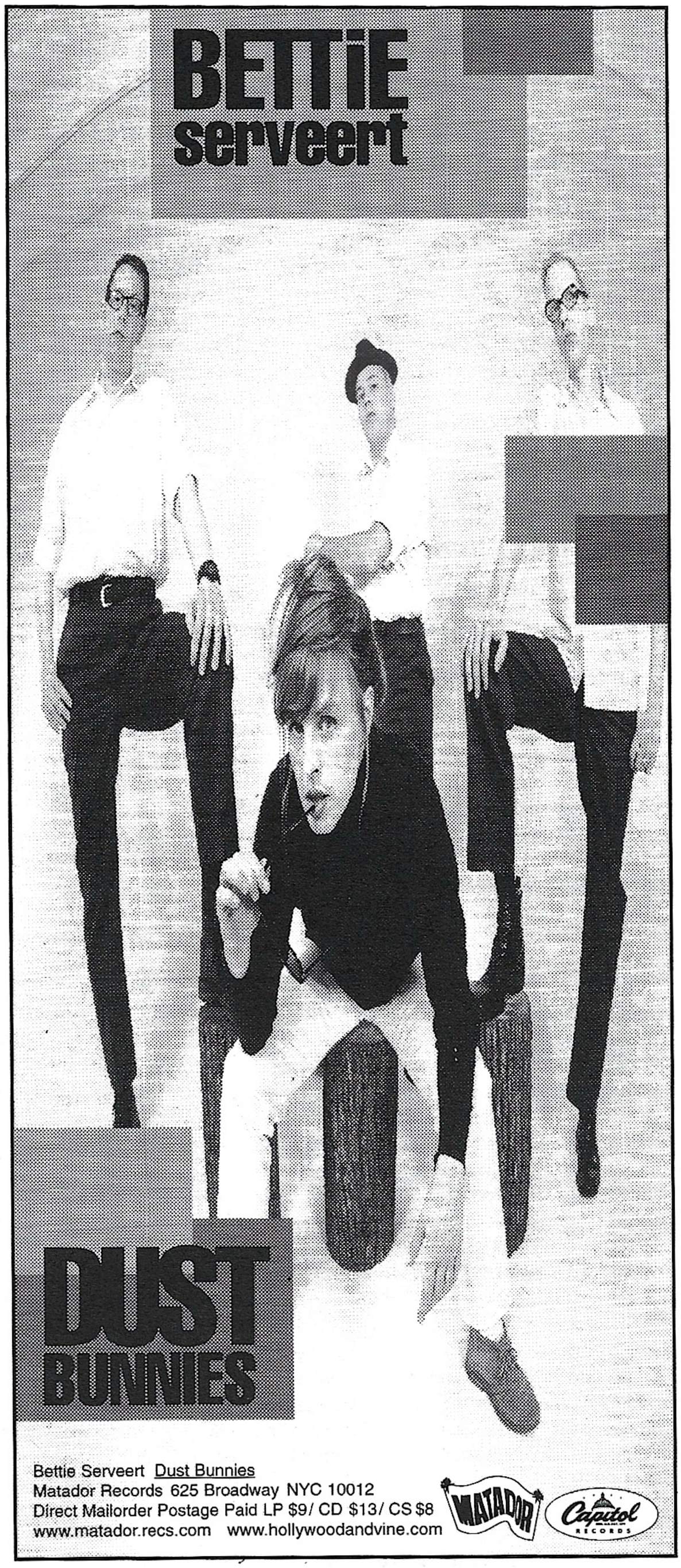
Can you tell me more about the **Jelly** *CD? Is that just you and your projects?*

Yeah, mainly. The Sea Haggs was definitely a band between me and Ian; we had a lot of different drummers come through. All the recorded stuff from that period is on it, there's four-track stuff and fully-recorded in proper studios stuff, offshoots from that period. The first Popemobile song is on that, actually, and Falafel. The CD itself is split into five EPs; there are different groups of songs for different reasons. The first EP was the newest recorded stuff; on the second EP, all the songs are less than one minute long; the third EP was just me playing guitar by myself, the fourth was the old Sea Haggs EP that got rereleased; and the fifth was four-track. It probably doesn't make any sense unless you have it in front of you. It took me so long to save up the money that I used every bit of space. The other great thing about CDs is that for someone who's doing mail order, they're so much cheaper and easier to mail.

So what else are you doing these days?

At the moment I'm kind of on holiday, but I'm doing this printing. The people there, they teach you how do the printing, and I'm really into that. Ultimately I'm more into the manufacturing side of printing rather than reading or writing. Anything to do with music, really. So I'm going to learn how to do that, and I'm traveling around a bit. I intend to tour Europe again with the Ninety-Nine CD because they didn't have it before, I imagine in February or March. And I'll go back to Australia after that, probably. I'm sure if I stay here long enough, I'll end up drumming in someone's band, I'll get sucked into it. Because I can't say no.

Laura is now back in Australia. You can reach her and Choozy Distribution at PO Box 4434, Melbourne Uni, Parkville, Victoria, Australia 3052.



WHATEVER BECAME OF ALICE AND JANE

Jane Fox on the Marine Girls, Grab Grab the Haddock, and percussion samba

Back in Caught In Flux *#2, Tracey Thorn went into great detail about her time in the Marine Girls and the early days of Everything But the Girl. In my introduction, I noted my fruitless attempts to track down the other two Marine Girls, bass player Jane Fox and her sister, singer Alice Fox. I've always considered Jane to be the underrated member of the band. She wrote or co-wrote some of the best songs ("You Must Be Mad," "The Lure of the Rockpools," "Day/Night Dreams," "Times We Used To Spend," "Holiday Song"), and I've always admired her bass playing – it was often more complex and expressive than it sounded, as Tami and I learned firsthand when we learned "In Love" before the first Poconos show. The two EPs she and Alice recorded in the mid-1980s with Grab Grab The Haddock are favorites as well, preserving the melodic and untainted spirit of the Marine Girls while fleshing out the sound with saxophone and percussion. "Should either of them ever hear of this article, I'd be glad to print anything they should send," I wrote in issue #2, not really anything to come of it.*

But when I was planning my trip to England this fall, I remembered a letter from my friend Andrea in which she mentioned seeing Jane Fox playing in a band in Brighton. Could she possibly get in touch with Jane for me, I asked, so I could at least give her a copy of the magazine? Andrea passed me Jane's phone number, and I nervously called her to ask whether she'd consider meeting me in London for an interview. She agreed, and one early evening a week later, I met her outside the crowded Covent Garden tube station. We went to a café near the station and sat in a back room with a low table, throw pillows in lieu of chairs, and paintings of vines and trees on the wall. "This is where I meet my sister Emily to catch up on our lives," Jane said. Over our nearly three-hour conversation, she was articulate, enthusiastic (especially when I finally turned the conversation away from the Marine Girls) and full of stories and insights about her past and present. Perfectly lovely, in fact.

A visual artist and a lecturer by profession, Jane Fox is currently a percussionist in two bands – a 15-piece samba group called Carnival Collective, and a band called the Absolute Clock, led by her old friend Olly Sagar. The following is but an excerpt from one of the best conversations I've had in a long time.

...When I was very young, I learned the cello, but I went to cello lessons. It became a bit of a thing, really, because I didn't feel like I was musical in any way. Finally, my teacher did actually suggest that I give it up. Which I promptly did, because I was just dying to give it up. It was a horrible experience.

What made you overcome it?

Well, I think part of the horrible experience, first of all, is the way we're taught music in the West. It seems so stiff, formal and academic. I think it's very frightening. Actually, it's taken me a long time to overcome that legacy of feeling like you're not a musician. It's quite a serious thing. But what actually made me want to play guitar was Tracey's suggestion that I should the band, and Tracey asking me "what would you like to play?" The main inspiration for that is that there were a lot of people around in the town I lived in, Hatfield, and the town down the road, St. Albans, who were playing in bands. Some of whom were extremely talented, and some of whom who weren't. So the whole scene was just ripe for people to just have a go. And I just thought "yeah, I'd really like to do that."

Who were some of these people?

There was a music scene in Welwyn Garden City, which was about three miles down the road, which was mainly punk. And there was a music scene in St. Albans which was very much more pop-oriented. And there were some fabulous, fabulous bands. A band called the Alcoves, who were superb. A band called the Toys, who wrote these soulful songs, done in a really exciting way. Another person who was on that music scene was a guy called Clive Pig, who's actually still touring the States. He was fantastic, one of my favorite performers. He was just guitar and vocals, very animated and quirky. There was a guy who actually was my tutor at art college called Mike Adcock, who had a band called Accordions Go Crazy, a ten-piece accordion band. He used to stand on tables and play absurd bits of music.

So with all that activity, you just realized there was a place for you too?

Yes. Music can be fun, and it doesn't have to be rigid. You don't have to be able to read music, and you don't to particularly engage the academic side of it.

I think punk rock opened up a space for people that way. I mean, I had vocal music class in elementary school, and we were all reading the songs out of books. No one wanted to sing because they were too embarrassed. There's the idea that it's thing you're forced to do.

Yeah, that you're either talented or you're not, that you're born with the ability or you weren't. Actually, it was probably in about 1985, I went to a workshop run by a woman called Frankie Armstrong, who was a folk singer in this country and does a lot of voice work; she's blind. Her philosophy is that everyone can sing. That workshop just amazed me, really. She was fabulous: she had 30 people singing, she was doing a lot of call-and-response stuff. And that was the first thing that I actually came into contact with –this was the end of the Marine Girls – that made me think that there really is another way of making music that's really good that is to do with what you've got as a human being.

Jane Fox in Leicester Square, November 1996.

Did you think about that much when you joined the Marine Girls? Was that a way to overcome your self-consciousness about it?
I actually think I was a very self-conscious player. I joined the Marine Girls because I was really up for a crack. The whole idea I just thought was fabulous: to be in this band writing songs. We didn't even intend to ever perform, it was just three friends getting together. It was just something to do that was exciting and interesting, you know. Tracey just said, "Why don't you join? What do you want to play?" I think with her and Gina, it was just a case of coming into the band. I borrowed a bass from somebody else – which I've still got, actually.
How did it evolve? When did you realize that it could be more than just playing at home?
Well, it was quite funny, actually. As far as I can remember, we were doing it for mainly our own amusement. What happened was we were at a local gig. One of the bands didn't turn up, and the person who was organizing the gig approached us and said, "You're in a band, aren't you? Why don't you play? The other band's not turned up." We borrowed the instruments and played, I think, three or four songs. I'm not sure about the chronology of it, actually, but we got contacted to be on a local compilation LP. That's how it began to escalate. The guy that made the compilation LP said he was going to choose three bands to make a long-playing cassette release that he would then sell. So it was like a collaboration with him. And that was the original recording of *Beach Party*. That recording was then put onto vinyl.
How did you meet Dan Treacy?
I think that might have been a Gina connection. He turned up at one of our gigs, I think...appeared in a puff of smoke, and then disappeared as quickly in another puff of smoke.
Where did the nautical theme come from...all the songs about the beach and so forth?
I have to say that it was me. I don't really remember of Tracey's songs being about that.

I suppose what I was thinking on my way here was firstly, how much part of another life it feels like. And another thing I was thinking about is how young we were. We were teenage girls playing in this band. I don't think I knew what I was doing or where it was going; I just knew I loved it. It's quite interesting, looking back at some of the reviews and seeing what people who were older and more informed than us at the time were actually thinking about it. People like Penny Kiley were picking up on the quite feminist content of it. But I know at the time I wouldn't have been able to talk about or being eloquent about it. Although I knew that I just wanted to get on with what I was interested in, and thought that girls played in bands and how annoying it was that it weren't any.
Once you started playing, did you feel like you fit in with anyone? Who did you feel you had an affinity with?
There were bands that I really, really loved. And I was about to say that the affinity was with the local music scene, but I'm not actually sure it was, because we didn't play very often on that scene. I mean, I loved bands like the Slits, the Raincoats and the Au Pairs. The Au Pairs were overtly political at the time, and coming into contact with that whole style of music was the beginning of a politicizing process for me. I think, just as young teenage women coming from a fairly suburban annex to London, from fairly safe backgrounds and schooling, that we were coming into contact with an exciting and very different world. And in terms of finding an activity that you were really passionate about...I mean, I can't speak for the others, but I embraced being in that band as if it were my whole life, I really did. And I think, going back to your question about nautical themes, I just totally went for it. I *was* a Marine Girl, you know. It wasn't separate from my life at all. That's how I felt about it; I was passionate about it. And that was politicizing in a small way of *getting on with your thing* and not really worrying what other people thought about it. But then later, we did begin to worry, because people were reviewing us and we were playing in prestigious places that our sound really wasn't meant to be heard in. I mean, now I'd say "no, we're not going to play that venue" because it didn't suit what we were doing, but then we were just like, "Wow, we got a gig at the Lyceum!"
I have a tape of you and the Go-Betweens playing there in 1983.
It was probably a poor tape (laughter). It was hard playing live, and I never felt comfortable, I don't think. Probably one or two times in small venues, local venues. Like we played in a fire station. For me, it was a matter of confidence. I now think that if you're performing in a band, you've got to give out. You can't drain energy off the audience. I wasn't a bass player; I was someone who had learned bass lines on a bass. I used to have recurring dreams that my sleeves got too long to play. I didn't like playing live. It wasn't a creative process for me; it was a frightening process. Sometimes I enjoyed it, but mostly, if you'd given me something to hide behind, I would have been behind it.
Well, I wondered what people made of you, because at the time there just weren't that many bands doing what you what you were doing. Did they like it, find it refreshing, hate it?
I think a lot of people did find it refreshing. And it surprises me how quite a broad range of people there were. I mean, we had a *punk* following in Welwyn Garden. Quite a hardcore following that used to come to our gigs. We had a quite anarchist following in London as well – wait, that was Grab Grab the Haddock, sorry! I'm not sure how much of the appeal was that we were three young teenage girls up on stage doing something. John Peel picked up on us and gave us quite a lot of publicity. We did two sessions for him; he was quite instrumental in us getting heard.

...The female role in music still does interest me. I'll always give all-women bands an ear. I think it was part of the whole thing...that kind of anyone can do it, get up and have a go, that was really part of the culture at the time. It kind of made it non-discriminatory. Although I have to say that quite a lot of bands that did have females were taking on that singer role at times. Which I don't really have a problem with now, but I do love to see female musicians playing in bands. I just like that.
How extensively did you tour?
We did mostly London gigs. We went to Belgium one year. That was lovely, actually. We played at a New Year's event. It was a warehouse with four floors. There was a salsa band on the bottom floor, and a small pop band, kind of Marine Girls style middle floor, a massive buffet on the next floor, and then film showings on the top floor. During the evening, you could lead the way wherever. It went from 8:00 at night until 8:00 in the morning. We actually played at midnight, and everybody lit sparklers. And I really enjoyed that; that was wonderful. There were gigs that I did enjoy playing, but on the whole, I was a self-conscious musician.
How about Alice and Tracey? Did they fell self-conscious as well?
Tracey, in the beginning, would get very nervous. I think we all would before playing. Alice, I think, was less self-conscious.
Yeah, Tracey mentioned in that letter how Alice threatened a heckler once.
She didn't *threaten* him. Someone threw a glass at her, and she decided to deal with it. She said, "Whoever threw that glass can come up and sort it out," you know. Which I thought was quite a brave thing to do, actually. It was typical of her at the time. She had a much harder exterior edge than me, definitely, and was definitely a lot more hardcore than I was. She was into a lot more hardcore type of music than I was. But very gentle and soft on the inside. But that was part of her image and how she was living her life.
You designed the album covers. Was that an outgrowth of going to art school, a good outlet for that side of your creativity?

I think it was just part and parcel of that whole thing. It wouldn't have even crossed my mind that someone else would do it. And yeah, now I would say that it was a creative project that involved making the image to go with it as well. We were forever – well, not *forever* – producing board games to go with *Beach Party*, and little magazines. Tracey and I did a fanzine at one point. We only did a couple of issues.

What was the board game?

It was called "Race To The Shed." *Beach Party* was recorded in two days in a garden shed in Ilford. We made this board game that had counters – you could be either Tracey, Gina, Alice or Jane. Basically it was a race. There were little flat things with drawings of us on them. Through the roll of the dice you'd race around, and there were various things to scuffle you along the way, various ways to catapult you to places. We issued that board game with the cassettes – it was part of the cassette package. I was really into that side of things. We had a Marine Girls Fun Bag as well.

Was "Catch The Cod" an inside joke? That slogan appears a lot on your record jackets and runoff grooves.

I think that might have been part of the board game. We were into slogans. We would make these stickers and stick them all around town, in the local record shops, stick them on lampposts or on the back of buses. "Catch The Cod" was...you had to make the connection. I think that was the main slogan, actually. I was the person who was obsessed with the sea. I've always loved the sea. Most of my songs were probably about rockpools and things. I did drop the sea theme after awhile and start writing about more general things.

How did you keep the band going with Tracey going to school up in Hull? Did it present a problem?

Yeah. Actually, we were in three different places – I was in Brighton, Tracey was in Hull, and Alice was in Hatfield. You could join the dots with us across the whole of the country. Geographically, it caused a problem because we couldn't get together so frequently. But we weren't really a gigging band. We played select gigs, but we weren't playing every week by any means. A problem in retrospect was that our interests became diversified because of that move. Tracey went to Hull and met Ben, got involved with Everything But the Girl. I went to Brighton and met somebody and started going to college. And suddenly, from this friendship – the two of us had quite an intense friendship at that time – that kind of thing of breaking apart and both starting intense friendships with other people. Finding it very hard, in retrospect, to communicate about what was going on for us. Finding it very hard to deal with what was happening. The distance actually made that worse, and that's what I see as what happened. Alice was left in the middle; she was younger than us. I think, in retrospect as well, that I knew that it couldn't last. but I didn't want it to not last. I was in love with the whole thing, and I don't think I took on board what was happening at the time. And there was very little communication with us, which caused a great deal of problems.

Didn't the first Everything But the Girl single come out around the time of* Beach Party*? They seemed to appear concurrently.

No, it was probably around the time of *Lazy Ways*. And that's another thing that I can say in retrospect, is that our interests lay in very different areas. At the time, I found it very hard to see, because we'd been working together in this band, but basically Tracey was up in Hull doing Cole Porter covers like "Night and Day," with Ben. And I was down in Brighton playing xylophones with ping-pong balls. That is a definite move in opposite directions. But that was very hard to acknowledge at the time. I knew that the Marine Girls would split. Tracey was playing gigs with Paul Weller. I knew it wouldn't hold, and I knew that her interests lay with where Everything But the Girl was going. Because of this lack of communication, I remember reading for the first time that it was going to happen in the music press. Both Alice and I found that very, very painful. It was something that we knew about but hadn't been spoken about, and there it was in black and white. And then there was this fateful gig in Glasgow which Tracey refers to in her letter. Which was appalling, and which we never should have played. After the gig, it became incredibly clear that our differences and interests were being stretched too tight.

Tell me how you met Stuart Moxham and how he affected the sound of* Lazy Ways*. There seemed to be a big leap soundwise from* Beach Party *to that.

Well, there was two or three years between those LPs. We just really liked what he was doing with the Gist and asked him if he would produce the record. Which he did. I *think* it went OK; I can't remember even speaking to the guy! Which I must have. I would love to speak to him, really. It was terrible; we were young and I just read today what he did, which was tune the guitars and fiddle a few knobs and basically let us get on with it. Which is my recollection. He seemed like a thoroughly nice guy; he had quite a mellow influence, I think. He just exuded mellowness.

Have you ever heard the song "Whatever Became of Alice and Jane" by Confetti?

No! How does it go? Are they an American band?

They were British. The lyrics are basically about going on a beach holiday. It's very much a tribute.

No. I'd like to hear that out of interest.

Also, have you ever heard Unrest's version of "Love To Know?"

No, I'd like to hear that, too. I have to say that pretty much after the Marine Girls, I lost interest in that whole scene for quite some years, that briefly perked up again with bands like the June Brides and the Pastels a bit. But really, that was it. I lost my obsession with that style of music.

Did you have a favorite song, or something that stood out as the best example of what you wanted to do?

I did really like "Don't Come Back" a lot. And I liked "Lazy Ways." If I was going to play someone now something off that LP, it would be those two. I think "Don't Come Back" is a nice song. And if I was going to play something off of *Beach Party* to someone...it could be the Marine Girls theme. Or "Love To Know."

How collaborative were the Marine Girls? Were there Tracey's songs and your songs, or did you work on them together?

There were Tracey's songs and my songs. I needed collaboration from Tracey because I wasn't a guitar player, so I would have to work out something on the bass, write the words, and then leave the guitar open. We didn't actually sit down and do any kind of organic type things.

Was there any sibling rivalry between you and Alice, or any competition between you and Tracey songwriter-wise?

Not within the band, actually. It felt too exciting for that. We would write songs and play them for each other, you know. And we would quite often know what the songs were about because we were quite close as friends. Quite often, we didn't need to be told what incident or event or way or feelings that the songs were about.

Were they based on real life?

Well, mine were, even though they were cloaked in sea water. Most of them made reference to something emotional that was going on at the time, albeit obliquely.

After the Marine Girls, you and Alice did Grab Grab the Haddock. Would you call that a continuation of what you were doing? Did you have different intentions in mind?

It was something completely different. It was still a collection of friends; that still felt like the most important thing. In the hotel room that evening after the Glasgow gig, Lester Noel, who'd actually come up to see the gig, and I decided we wanted to work together. And that was when we hatched the idea, and that Alice would be part of it. *Actually, the other person who came into it was Alice's boyfriend at the time, Steve, who played guitar. After awhile, we got a*

JANE'S TAPE

After our interview, Jane gave me a tape of her solo projects, starting from 1985 all the way up to the night before our interview. "I still write songs and play them, to myself mainly," she said. "I think, if you listen to this stuff, you will understand how different my and Tracey's musical interests were by the time we split up." Indeed, if this sampling is any indication, Jane stayed true to the Marine Girls/Grab Grab The Haddock awkward pop sound as Tracey moved in a jazz-pop (and then dancey) direction. Most of these tracks have never been released in any easily available form, if they were released at all. I've tried to describe them as best as I can, and have included Jane's notes (in italics) where applicable.

"Square Dance" and "Fire Down Below," recorded in 1985. *"'Square Dance' and 'Fire Down Below' are two things that have not been released. They're just for my amusement; they were done for my college course."* "Square Dance" is a tape-loop collage that includes barking dogs, children's voice, bells and melodica. "Fire Down Below" is a jaunty instrumental with acoustic guitar, mandolin and melodica. It reminds me slightly of the instrumentals on The Gist's *Embrace The Herd*.

"The Adventures of Kerry Fiddles, " recorded in 1988. *"This was released as a flexidisc. I went under the name of Kerry Fiddles for that."* A seafaring waltz complete with a sampled grizzled pirate voice muttering "Shiver me timbers." Nice accordion.

"Possession," recorded in 1986. A minimal Elvis Costello cover with just vocals, organ and what sounds like a looped cat's meow. Jane's got a great voice. Like everything else by her on this tape, it's got a very relaxed, homemade feel.

"Drive Away Dull Care," recorded in 1988. *"This is a song of mine that I did kind of solo, which was released on* Hoopla, *which was a local compilation in Brighton under the name Where Ethel Fell. Kerry Fiddles is also on that."* An uptempo pop song in the vein of Grab Grab The Haddock. Fictitious band members included "Valerie Leathers," "Sherbert Moss" and "Madelaine Waits."

"Belittle Blue Boy" and "Gravity Kills The Cat," recorded in 1988. *"This is just stuff I recorded on my portastudio."* "Belittle Blue Boy" is more uptempo GGTH-styled pop with a typically strong bass line. "Gravity Kills The Cat" is in ¾ time and follows its own nonlinear path, taking uneasy breathing pauses in the middle of verses.

"Thanks," recorded in November 1996. *"This is a song that I recorded into my Dictaphone for you last night. I wrote it in 1994. It was actually a tribute to Jonathan Richman; I'm a big fan. The opening chord is taken from a song of his, but then it goes into my song."* The opening few bars are a takeoff of Richman's "Down In Bermuda" ("Jonathan, Jonathan/You don't know how much you've helped these past few days"), followed by a first-

female drummer, a woman called Michelle who was great. And various kind of extra percussion players and Tim Hall, who used to play clarinet and sax with the Marine Girls, would play live with us sometimes. So sometimes there were seven or eight people on stage. It was a hugely different experience to playing with the Marine Girls, and actually, playing live with Grab Grab the Haddock could be tremendous fun. The pressure was off. There were eight people on one stage playing. I can remember one fantastic gig when our tambourine player's tambourine was exploding onto the stage. And we were back playing smaller venues. I always liked that kind of intimate, on-theground style of working. At the moment, one of the bands I play in is a 15-piece percussion samba band that plays in the street. When we do play static gigs, it's normally on a low level where there is quite an interaction with the audience. And a lot of dancing; people can come up. It's not the kind of music that works on a traditional stage. That's one thing I've always loved about playing, that contact.

"Grab Grab the Haddock" is an interesting name.

The name comes from a painting by a British artist called Bruce McLean. I'd seen the painting in an exhibition of his at the ICA, and it was a wonderful painting that made me laugh out loud. I thought it was great, and I remembered the name of it. I thought it was a fabulous name.

And it ties in with the sea theme, too.

I'm afraid I was still obsessed with fish at that point, obviously! It took me an hour at some bus stop to persuade Steve, mainly, that it was a good name for the band. I wrote to Bruce McLean and asked him if we could use the name, and he said, "Yeah, great, go for it!"

I also noticed that more people in the band wrote songs. That was in the spirit of collaboration, too?

It was a lot more flexible. And I suppose as well, not quite so…I was a lot more like "this is a band" now, rather than "this is my life." It was great to get to know and work with Lester. He's still a friend of mine in Brighton, you know. He went on to be in Beats International. After Grab Grab the Haddock, he had a band called North of Corn Wallis. I used to sometimes be their roadie, drive them in their van to gigs in places like Cardiff. And Lester was great: I remember one gig where I drove to Cardiff Arts Center. The whole band unloaded, and Lester found out how much they were charging to get in. And he went, "Right, get the stuff and get back in the van, fuck this, we're not playing here, it's too expensive." We drove 'round Cardiff in the pissing rain, and Lester went looking for a pub that would be good to play in. Finally Lester jumped out the van, went into this pub, and went, "Right, we're playing in this pub." And we had all the people who'd come to see the gig stuffed into the back of the van. That was great. I love things like that. After that, Lester went on to collaborate with Beats International. Now he's working on his own stuff, still, and he's been singing with a band called Gangway. They just recorded an LP; Lester made contact with them and went over. He's married to a woman who I know and has three fabulous kids.

Grab Grab the Haddock went on tour with the Colour Field, which was great. We were actually much more of a touring and a gigging band than the Marine Girls were. We only played about five or six gigs (with the Colour Field). It was all geared about the Manchester United away matches, because Terry Hall's a big Man United fan.

I think what happened with the band was that Alice split up with Steve, and the band just went bang.

Is he the one that Tracey said "attached himself" to the Marine Girls?

He didn't join the band. He would quite often come to our gigs. I can't remember, but perhaps on that night he invaded the stage. As far as I'm concerned, he never joined the Marine Girls!

Tell me about Trixie's Big Red Motorbike. **(Jane clutches her hands to her heart and sighs)**

You sang backing vocals with them, right?

They actually wrote to us and said they liked our music and did we want to hear their music. I got writing with them and heard their stuff, and actually really, really liked it. I made friends with Mel, who was the singer. They're actually brother and sister. I think they were great, and they were lovely people. We went on holiday to the Isle of Wight one year, me and Alice and my dad and my sister Emily, and we would go and call for Mel. After that, we became quite firm friends. I did backing vocals for their Peel Session under a pseudonym, because I was still contracted to Cherry Red. That was great to be invited to that; it was great fun.

What did you do after Grab Grab the Haddock?

I always had this thing about music and art, and after that, I decided I wanted to be a visual artist. That was what I decided I was going to put my main energy into doing. It still felt like I wasn't really a musician. So that's where my energy went, and that's what I would describe myself as now. But I couldn't quite ever give up on the music, so I still tinkered around. I've been in various bands more or less continuously, playing bass until recently. But two people that I regularly worked with from that point on, and also worked with in college, were Olly Sagar and his brother Tim Sagar. They've got ongoing, kind of amorphous thing that is kind of collectively known as the Absolute Clock. It began when I was at college with Olly. I played double bass on some of his work he did for his degree. We used to have this collective of musicians that would every now and again, in some

form or other, play a gig. There were about seven of us involved in this. Actually, I'm playing with Tim and Olly now in the sort of current version of Absolute Clock. But what I'm doing is playing percussion. I don't play bass anymore.

Would you say you were you a frustrated percussionist?

Well, I think I might have been. In retrospect, I can remember asking my mum if I could learn the drums, and she just went "No...*way*!" Because actually, the drummer from Nazareth lived in our village when I was a kid. I think this is why she didn't want me to be a drummer! Actually, listening to a lot of the stuff I was doing at college, a lot of it was very percussive. And what I love, and I have to say this about percussion, is that I don't have to think about what bloody key I'm supposed to be in! There's lots of other things to think about that, but not that, thank god. Percussion is something that I am learning. And again, I'm now in this 15-piece band, Carnival Collective. I joined that about a year and a half ago, and I fucking love it. It's a passion. It's the first music I've been involved in where I don't feel any kind of self-consciousness. It makes people dance. Everyone plays their part in the band, and there are some very good musicians, and I've been learning from them, and that's been fabulous. At the Notting Hill Carnival, we linked up with the London School of Samba, who also have samba bands linking with them from all over Europe. There were 225 live percussionists playing live drum 'n bass on the streets of Notting Hill. Have you heard that stuff? Because I noticed in your story about how you got into music that your parents were into samba...

My dad was.

But did that put you off it, or have you got a bit of that in your blood?

He didn't really play it very much around the house. But now I really like Stan Getz and Astrud Gilberto, lots of Brazilian bossa-nova.

The stuff I'm into is more hardcore percussion samba. I wish I'd heard that music 15 years ago.

How did you find this group?

I went to a drumming workshop, and the band was being set up in Brighton. I was invited to go and try out. It's a fabulous group of people from all walks of life. It's street music, it's live, it's raw...it's mesmerizing, it makes you want to bloody dance. I feel like I've found where I feel comfortable being a musician.

But that's ironic, isn't it? When you were in the Marine Girls, a band with almost no percussion, you said you felt self-conscious; with Grab Grab the Haddock, which had more percussion, you felt less self-conscious; and now, with the all-percussion band, you're completely at home.

I am! I've always wanted to be in a dance band, always. And it's great. And the Absolute Clock is great as well, because I'm doing percussion in that. I love what Tim and Olly do, so it's great to be involved with what they're doing as well.

It sounds like you're happier doing music now than you were before.

I think it's since I gave up bass, actually. Now I'm actually probably doing more music than I've ever done in my life. But it's not a problem anymore. And the art thing is really solid. I would still describe myself as an artist and not as a musician.

What kind of art do you do?

A lot of stuff on slides, a lot of photo-based stuff. A lot of big charcoal drawings, with collage and montage and color. And also, for the samba band, I work with a woman named Maria Tribe and we call ourselves Armadillo Arts. We print big banners and flags. Because the samba band is a visual thing, we make big women on sticks that people dance with while we're performing. We've got T-shirts that we all wear. Like a proper samba school, although we're not a proper samba school.

Do you make your living from art?

Yeah. I've been self-employed as an artist for four or five years. And I teach. I'm a visiting lecturer at Brighton University. I teach part time with students on a performance basis, teaching visual arts. They've got four or five visiting tutors who are artists who do maybe five or six hours a week. And that is superb. I love it.

Are there any recording plans for the Absolute Clock?

We're recording some stuff on Wednesday. And I've brought a CD of Olly's stuff for you. I'm not on this, but it was put together in 1994. It's kind of a collection of songs of Olly's, kind of catalogued up to that date. And I've always really liked his songs.

What's Alice up to these days?

She's great. She's actually married to Tim, Olly's brother, who plays in the Absolute Clock and who is my favorite organ player on the planet. Alice is wonderful. She coordinates an advocacy project for people with learning disabilities part-time. They live close to me in Brighton, and it's great. We spend a lot of time together, we're very close. And she's the mother of Felix. He's a year and four months old, and he is a scream. He's got such a sense of humor, and he's so on the case. He's like Tim and Alice in that he hardly ever sleeps.

What else are you listening to these days?

Musicwise...mostly percussion samba, quite a lot of Latin stuff, cumbia. I still quite like a lot of jazz, stuff like Charles Mingus, quite frantic stuff. Sonny Rollins. I really like a lot of acid jazz that came out, a lot of jungle...

person account of how Jonathan Richman cheered her up in the middle of a breakup.

"Girl On My Wall" and "The Things I Say" by the Toys, recorded in 1979. *"These are two songs that the Toys released on a home-produced single. The Toys were a local band from St. Albans. We were big, big fans of theirs, and actually they were the main inspiration for us getting together. The singer in the Toys is actually Jez Sagar, who is Olly and Tim's older brother."* Both songs are straightforward and engaging. They could have just as easily have come out on, say, Shinkansen now and made perfect sense. "Girl On My Wall" is a dreamy ode to – whom? A centerfold, an old movie poster? Someone unattainable, in any event, someone who lives in the narrator's mind more than anywhere else ("You can tear her picture down/I've got a million more"). "The Things I Say" has a sax and a Housemartins-style jauntiness to it. Olly Sagar continues in this vein with the Absolute Clock; their 1994 *Air In A Stone* CD, recorded before Jane joined on percussion, is well worth hearing *(c/o Honey Recordings, 62 Hanover St., Brighton BN2SS, UK).*

"The Adventures of Benjamin Beat" by Clive Pig, recorded in 1980. Clive Pig is maybe a little too hyperactive for his own good, and his vibrato would definitely grate on me for more than 10 minutes at a time. But "The Adventures Of Benjamin Beat" is completely charming (sample lyric: "I don't take sugar/I used to once/AAAAHHHH!"). Is this the same Clive Pig who lived in Hopewell, New Jersey and recorded a number of LPs with the Hopeful Chinamen?

"Norman and Narcissus," "White Horses" and "That's The End of That" by Trixie's Big Red Motorbike, recorded in 1983. I can see why the Fox sisters were so taken with this duo, as Mark and Melanie Litten's music was in the same minimal, lovely vein as the Marine Girls'. "Norman and Narcissus" and "White Horses" are among the sweetest, breeziest songs I've ever heard, complete with minimal instrumentation, thin/understated vocals, and melodies to die for. "That's The End Of That" goes even one step beyond that, sarcastically describing a disintegrating relationship and a tight-lipped lover in wonderfully sarcastic terms ("You probably know what I'm trying to say/You probably don't know/You always were a bit slow") with call-and-response vocals. I listened to "That's The End Of That" the whole week I was in England: on buses, on the Underground, before going to sleep, when I woke up. When I got home, I tracked down *The Intimate Sound of Trixie's Big Red Motorbike*, an LP that collects most of the band's released material and several demos and alternate versions. It's still available; write to 58 Ribblesdale Road, London, SW16 6SE, England or email accident@bigfoot.com to get a copy.

I've been hearing jungle everywhere I've gone this week.
It's very clever. I don't know if you know of this thing called the Criminal Justice Bill in this country which has put quite a lot of restriction on live music in an attempt to put down raves. There's a clause in it about repetitive beats, and what's brilliant about jungle is that actually, a lot of it isn't repetitive. They circumnavigate that whole law. Which is what I like best about it.
How do you outlaw repetitive beats? Is there a time limit or something?
Yeah! It's unbelievable! You'd be amazed what they can outlaw here. You can't stand in the street in a gang of more than five people in this country without breaking out the law if someone decides that's what you're doing.
Do you have any final thoughts on the Marine Girls or your role in it, or your past in general?
I think those records are great, actually. I very rarely listen to them, but I'm actually very proud of them. I was very pleased that I spent my teenage years being obsessed with music, actually.

SELECTIVE DISCOGRAPHY

with the Marine Girls:
"On My Mind" / "The Lure of the Rockpools" *(In Phaze 7", 1981)*
Beach Party (Whaam LP, 1981)
"Don't Come Back" / "You Must Be Mad" *(Cherry Red 7", 1983)*
Lazy Ways (Cherry Red LP, 1983)
Beach Party/Lazy Ways (Cherry Red CD, 1988)

with Grab Grab the Haddock:
Three Songs by Grab Grab the Haddock: "I'm Used Now," "Nothing You Say," "That Day" *(Cherry Red 12", 1984)*
Two More Songs by Grab Grab the Haddock: "Last Fond Goodbye," "Wan But Smiling" *(Cherry Red 7", 1985)*
Four More Songs by Grab Grab the Haddock: "Last Fond Goodbye," "Wan But Smiling," "For All We Know," "That Big Word But" *(Cherry Red 12", 1985)*

NEW OPENED EYES
Alastair Fitchett recalls Tracey Thorn's A Distant Shore

Right around the time the Marine Girls finished Lazy Ways, *Tracey Thorn released her solo album,* A Distant Shore. *Just acoustic guitar and vocals, it was a stark, brief and moving work that proved the perfect bridge between her work with Alice and Jane Fox, and the jazzier material she produced with Ben Watt and Everything But the Girl. In the following piece originally written for his fanzine* Tangents, *Alastair Fitchett ruminates on the Marine Girls,* A Distant Shore, *and where we was when he first heard them.*

I remember 1983 as a fantastic summer. There was much illicit drinking, a great deal of long hot rides of 80 miles over distant hills, and a multitude of what seemed to be endless parties. There was also a lot of music. Many of the specifics of the music I have long forgotten; I presume they were generally hits of the day, the pop music that my friend's 14-year-old sister and her gaggle of girlfriends played on old tape recorders. A few things only remain in my mind after the passing of time and erosion of memory: I recall that the early Style Council played a lot on warm evenings and that Weekend's *La Variete* was similarly a beloved accompaniment to lazy sun-soaked afternoons in back gardens as we rested between water fights. The Marine Girls also played, at least in my bedroom, and the Sound of Young Scotland was always prominent on the record player at the endless parties, or at least it was when we were able to displace the aforementioned gaggle of girls' Duran Duran and Wham! records. Not that we totally disliked those pop moments. I have memories of dancing to and enjoying the teenage thrill of the best *Fantastic* slots of Pop, but it might just have been because of the girls. I forget so much.

One record, however, towered above the entire summer like a reluctant and unlikely colossus. Tracey Thorn's *A Distant Shore* was hardly the most forceful of records, yet it forced its way into the lives of me and my friends with a supple ease. It was an understated, simple, flawed beauty of a record that was short enough to always result in a yearning for more, no matter how many times it was played. And it was played a lot.

The sound was one of simplistic guitar strumming, occasionally just out of tune, with Tracey's voice drifting on top like a strange jewel, always seeming a heap more soulful than the soul records I would hear on the radio. It was a sound that made perfect sense in sunsets and shaded foot of gardens by the gazebo, and it was a sound that fitted to perfection late nights sprawled indoors surrounded by empty bottles and lonely friends. It was a sound that was heard in many places: Gardens, beaches, tents, living rooms, bedrooms, the roof of a garage... The sound reminds me of all those places, but strangely the one place it reminds me most of is the one place we never played it, although we talked about it often. It was on the hillside overlooking the bay in which our home town sat, a place where we always planned to spend an afternoon in the sun with cider and *A Distant Shore*, but never did. It's a place and a "memory" made all the more poignant by the very fact that it did not happen and so cannot fade. All the faces of that summer are on that hillside, in that record. All the faces which are now grown older, married, mortgaged, lost or dead, for better or for worse. They are all crystal clear because they never existed like that in the first place.

I am "happier" now than then, and although the past is passed and I would never go back, I still envy very much those who have yet to be that age and of that persuasion. Those who might feel the same intense feelings for the first time to the tune of any particular sound. And although I hope today that they listen to and love Tracey with her Spring Heel Jack breakbeat backing, I also hope they investigate further, delve back in time to *A Distant Shore* and discover the crystalline summertime blue jewels it holds within.

You can order Tangents *for $3.00US from Alastair at PO Box 102, Exeter, EX2 4YI. Or e-mail him at tangent@mail.zynet.co.uk.*

Rachel Bor and Debsey Wykes recall their days in Dolly Mixture

For some of us, last year's CD release of Dolly Mixture's legendary Demonstration Tapes *was cause for profound rejoicing. Its 27 sparkling, adrenalin-charged pop songs combined elements of the Ramones, Undertones and Shangri-Las. As Steve Burt wrote in* Popwatch, *Debsey Wykes, Rachel Bor and Hester Smith wrote very few typical songs about teen love or crushes, but nonetheless perfectly captured the dizzy feeling of being young, confused and excited ("Dream Come True," "Welcome To The Perfect Day," "How Come You're Such A Hit With The Boys, Jane?"). I was thrilled to finally have my own copy, and I spent a great deal of space explaining why last issue.*

A few months later, I got a package in the mail from one "Rachel" in Brighton, England. It seems that Steve met her while in the UK, showed her the review, and passed along my address. In her letter, Rachel mentioned the two bands she'd playing with recently, Sex Love Buster Baby (which she'd just left) and Fruit Machine. There was a three-song Fruit Machine tape in the package, which proved the band to be heirs apparent to Dolly Mixture, very much in the same giddy pop vein. You never know what you're going to get when your idols re-enter the scene, but luckily Fruit Machine turned out to be very good indeed. They even covered "How Come You're Such A Hit With The Boys, Jane?" A subsequent package included a tape of unreleased Dolly Mixture songs, including several BBC sessions and five 1984 recordings that didn't make it onto Demonstration Tapes. *It almost goes without saying that all the unreleased tracks were great, from the ebulliant "Dead Rainbow" (apparently a live favorite) to the mournful, reflective "Now When I Count" and "Dust to Dust" ("for no reason I can think of/it comes as no surprise"). I could practically feel my head explode the first time I heard it. I mean, who knew that there were even* more *brilliant Dolly Mixture recordings laying in Rachel's closet?*

Rachel agreed to let Sheila and me visit her in England and ask some questions. Apparently convinced that we weren't stalkers, she also gave me Debsey's phone number in London, and hinted that Debsey might have some spare copies of the vinyl double LP. This was clearly going to be the best vacation ever, I thought eagerly to myself...

So early one Wednesday morning, we took British Rail out of Victoria Station to Hassocks, which is just north of Brighton. Rachel met us at the station with her youngest son, four-year-old Sid. She packed the three of us up in her 4x4 van, and off we sped down a small-town main street, some winding paths, and into the English countryside of mountains and dirt roads. Sid talked nonstop, proving himself quite the literate and sarcastic (dare I say precocious?) child. Finally we stopped at a small house overlooking a panoramic hilly view. In the living room, there was a crackling fireplace, a huge picture window looking out onto the hills, and Captain Sensible's gold records hanging on the walls. There was a small studio in a side room near the living room, and "Cap," as he's known to his family, was there listening to playbacks of his solo material. Cap came out, sporting the exact same bleached blond surfer hairdo so familiar from his LP covers, and introduced himself. He knew we were interviewing Rachel about Dolly Mixture and offered, "Oh, good luck then."

While Rachel made us tea, she let us look through Hester's Dolly Mixture scrapbooks. These included photos, press clipping, old set lists, even embossed "CAPTAIN SENSIBLE AND DOLLY MIXTURE" matchbooks that they'd specially made for one show. If we could wait until 5:00 pm, Rachel said, there was a chance that Hester (would be able to come over. Unfortunately, we couldn't. Apparently she never showed anyway.

Finally we turned on the tape recorder and began talking about the origins of Dolly Mixture. Rachel was fairly shy and reserved, and answered phone calls or tended to Sid in between questions. Occasionally Cap would enter the room and pitch in a comment or two as an added treat. I worried that we were being a little, uh, overeager in our line of questioning, but Rachel invited Sheila to join Fruit Machine at a show the next week, so we couldn't have been too *off-putting. After the interview, Rachel played us some Sex Love Buster Baby demos – very good, kind of in the jittery Lung Leg vein – and a beautiful Christmas song by Fruit Machine.*

Rachel Bor and her back pages.

How did the reissue of* Demonstration Tapes *come about?

There were actually quite a few people who wanted to put it out at the time, about three different people. Debsey was quite involved with St. Etienne at the time, so Bob Stanley got to put it out. He was quite into it.

Had he been a fan before he met Debsey?

Yeah, yeah. Along with some other people, he sort of said that we were one of the early things that had inspired them to get a band together.

Have you gotten any recognition from it? Any reviews?

I've only seen one review in *Record Collector.* And yours. That's as far as I know.

Sheila: There are a lot of Dolly Mixture fans you probably don't know about, actually. It's so hard to get hold of – it's not that the music wasn't good enough, because when anyone hears it, they go "This is amazing!"

Mike: Were you aware of that at all?

No, not at all!

So tell me about the early days of Dolly Mixture. How did you all get together?

Well, Debsey and Hester were at school together in Cambridge. They got a band together that just played once, I think, and that was that. They wanted to carry on and play, get anyone together to play. And Debsey knew me because I lived up her road. I was a bit younger and my brother was a drummer, so he had a drum kit and taught Hester the basic beats. I could play a few chords, and Debsey picked up the bass –

she'd never touched it before – and we had the bloke singer. He had a nervous breakdown, went crazy. So we just did this one gig. Someone was having a birthday party, and we had to get some songs together. He did that one; I think I sang one song. And then we just used to go round to student bars and stuff. There was this one bar where a band would be playing and we would ask, "Can we play your instruments?" And they'd say "Get off! Go away!" But one bloke said, "I don't believe you're in a band." He wanted us to drop off a tape, but we didn't have anything so we went round his place and he just laughed. We got a biscuit tin and sang guitar lines and things over the top. It was just ridiculous. And he just said, "All right, you can play with us then." Then Chris didn't want to do it anymore, so we had to get it together, just the three of us. I don't know what we sounded like. But from then, everyone really liked it and it just took off.

Did you start doing cover songs right away, or did you start writing originals right away?

We had, I think, about two original songs, and the rest were covers. That was the spring of 1978. In the summer of 1978, we just practiced and practiced and wrote songs, and gradually our songs took over.

Sheila: Did you all write together?

Usually Debsey or I'd come up with a tune, and Hester was the best at writing lyrics. But we'd all come up with our bits together.

Was there anything specific that inspired you to be in a band, musically or otherwise?

Well, my brother was in a band, but I never thought of it. I never really wanted to do it, actually. But because Debsey and Hester needed somebody, I said, "Well, all right then…" But, you know, I didn't ever wanted to do anything else then.

Were you listening to a lot of '60s stuff at the time between the cover songs and the early material?

I think that was mainly Debsey. She had a lot of stuff. And her brother collected lots of '60s records. I used to listen to what my brothers listened to, really, and that was (stuff like) the Ramones. So that side of our songs, the guitarry stuff, tended to come from me, I suppose.

How did it evolve? It seems like Dolly Mixture got signed to Chrysalis pretty quickly.

One of our gigs supporting my brother was on the John Peel show. He really liked it. Someone was there with a camera and took a picture of us and John Peel. It was in *Sounds* every week. We just got so much press all of a sudden. So I gave up the day job. Hanging up clothes. They never let me use the till. You have to train for a year before you can use the till (laughter). From that we started getting London gigs. And several companies got interested quite quickly, but because we didn't want a little girlie image type thing, we were fighting against that all the time. I think that's why record companies didn't like it much at the time.

That keeps coming up in all the press I've read.

I think we were all pretty naïve. We didn't know how people would take it. We didn't even think of that; we just did what we liked doing. As soon as we started getting all this sort of bad press…we didn't realize that people would take it that way.

Were there any other bands around at the time that you felt were doing the same thing? It seems like Dolly Mixture were pretty unique, especially by 1979 standards.

We didn't know any other girls, really, who were in bands. All the bands in Cambridge were boys, doing covers of Led Zeppelin and stuff. We got to know some of the girl bands later on.

What did audiences make of you? Did they appreciate it, or think it was some kind of contrived image?

Well, we went on tour with the Undertones a couple of times, and their audience was very sort of mixed. And those people really liked us. It was quite positive, always.

From what I've read, it sounds like your time with Chrysalis was a horror story. It sounds like they had a really specific idea of what they thought you should be.

First of all, they made us do a cover, which I think is always a mistake, especially when you're writing songs and want to be known for that. I think a lot of record companies, especially at that time, were doing that with bands, so we went along with that. But we weren't happy, and we let them know we weren't happy.

That was "Baby It's You?"

Yeah.

What was it like working with Eric Faulkner on that, the ex-Bay City Roller?

It was so funny; I don't know how it happened, really. He invited me round to his penthouse suite to have a guitar lesson. (all laugh)

Sheila: That *must have been something.*

Well, no, I don't think I was his type, because there were a couple of tall, blonde modelly types around the place…and it was all white leather sofas and white fairy carpets. It was bizarre. And he taught me how to play a scale. I've never had a lesson on the guitar in my life, and suddenly I knew how to play a scale. Which I don't think I've ever used. He let us play everything on the record, which was one of our demands that they didn't like.

They wanted to use studio musicians?

Yeah. The other producer we got didn't like us butting in all the time. He just wanted to produce this record. He made us go sit in the garden. When we weren't doing something in the studio, he didn't want us in there at all.

Roger Bechirian?

Yeah. And when Debsey and I were doing backing vocals, the atmosphere in the room was so tense that we just got the giggles. We couldn't sing; we were just laughing, and there would just be silence in the control room. Chrysalis never asked us to do another single. We weren't getting along with our manager particularly at that point; there were some problems there. There was just no communication going on. It was just really bad.

After that, you were on Respond, right?

That wasn't until 1981 or 1982. We supported the Jam, and Paul Weller liked us.

Had you always just recorded demos for yourself that whole time? I'm curious as to why most of the songs on Demonstration Tapes *never turned up elsewhere.*

Really, our attitude was that we were up for it, you know, and record companies didn't like it. I don't think record companies have ever changed. I think they've always thought that if they could sell something, they'd sign it and not give people control…

When did you and Captain Sensible meet?

He came to see us play down at the Rock Garden, and he didn't even know we were on. He just came down with Charlie Harper from the UK Subs for a drink and wasn't interested in the band. And then he suddenly noticed that there were songs going on, and he quite liked them. He came backstage, and Charlie Harper was so drunk that he just threw up. That was our first meeting. I think that Cap was quite pissed, and he was going, "Oh, I really liked it and I

want to produce you!" We were just laughing. But he kept coming back to more gigs, every time we played he was there, so we said, "Right, we'll do a demo." So we did "How Come You're Such A Hit With The Boys, Jane?," "Welcome To The Perfect Day" and "Never Let It Go." He came along with Paul Gray and it turned out really well.

Did you like the Damned?

Yeah. I'd been to see the Damned when I was 14 and quite liked them. I didn't know that much about them.

And then you became his backing vocalists.

He just wanted us to do some vocals, and we didn't have a deal or anything, so we went along, we did some thing. And then suddenly he needed a filler track for his album and decided to do "Happy Talk." Yeah, the other two got to that session, I missed it. I was at the cinema.

But there's a gold record for "Happy Talk" there on the wall nonetheless, "to Rachel Bof."

I'm a fraud! Again, the record company picked up on that as a novelty idea and said they wanted that as a single when it was gonna be "Wot." Suddenly it all took off and we did all sorts of things with him. And it never felt like our own stuff particularly, but it was good fun.

I always wondered whether it was frustrating that a lot of people knew of you only as Captain Sensible's backing vocalists.

It was, yeah. We were hoping that from that maybe things would take off for the band, but it didn't.

Who was Jane of "How Come You're Such A Hit With The Boys, Jane?"

Ooh...are we gonna get sued? It's Jane from the Mo-Dettes. She had those painted eyebrows. "Her eyebrows may be the best thing in town..."

Really! I have that Mo-Dettes single where they list their likes and dislikes, and one of Jane's dislikes is "Dolly Mixtures..."

That's right, yeah! In 1979 we played with them, someone put us on the same bill, and they obviously hated what they'd read about us. We didn't know much about them. But Jane...there was a fruit machine in front of the stage, and she played it the whole time we were on the stage. There was hardly anyone there, and it was just going "Doo-doo-doo..."

Captain Sensible: That bitch in the other band?

Rachel: With the eyebrows.

Captain: "...they may *be* the best thing in town!"

Rachel: And then we heard them play and we were outraged, they were so dreadful! We bought their album just to listen to every track and we couldn't believe it.

Captain: I never heard their album. What was it like?

Rachel: It was dreadful!

Captain: All you girl groups...worse than bloke bands!

Rachel: But they didn't have tunes, did they? They had dreadful production, and the guitar sound was just shocking.

Did they ever write a song about you in exchange?

I don't think so. All they did in every interview...at the time there was all this "women in rock" stuff, and everyone was in black and we were just completely out on a limb. And everybody hated us, and it was just cool to have a go at us. The Marine Girls, too. We were outcasts.

Sheila: You were better than all of them!

Captain: All the other women in rock at the time were sort of tarty leather-clad slack types.

Rachel: You're a worse bitch then I am!

Captain: Well, they were, weren't they? They all had names like Fanny and Girlschool. All that stuff of tarty rock-chick sort of stuff. And they went around with a sort of mirror image of the bloke metal approach, the horrible rock and roll thing.

Sure, but at the same time you were around the Raincoats had started, the Marine Girls were around...

We never met the Raincoats. And (we liked) the Slits as well. But most of the interviews were with people like Girlschool and the Mo-Dettes. We used to play a lot with another girl band called the Gin Slips. They nearly made it, but the record company made them put out a cover version. They did "48 Crash.," and it was good, got played a lot on the radio.

I'm really curious as to the growth on Demonstration Tapes. *You went from picking out instruments to writing complex songs.*

Well, I don't know how it would have gone on. The songs I wrote were still quite poppy.

Which were some of yours?

I did "Hit With The Boys," "Perfect Day," I'd have to look at the list...It was evolving, and I think it was going quite well. You got that demo that never got released; it was progressing. Yeah, it didn't come to a natural end, the band. (It ended) when I had (my oldest son) Fred.

Well, toward the end, you also got into writing songs with strings. It seemed like kind of a departure, especially "Whistling In The Dark" and The Fireside *EP.*

Me and Debsey had always done things together; for years we played things. I think we did a birthday present for Hester which was this tape, we just played all this stuff. Then it just went onto B-sides. It wasn't what I thought was Dolly Mixture, really, myself. *The Fireside* wasn't my idea and all; it's not the way I would have gone. It was late on; it could have been 1984 or 1985.

Captain Sensible and Rachel with their youngest son, Sid.

I noticed that both Demonstration Tapes *and the "Remember This" single came out on Dead Good Dolly Records. That was your own label?*
Yeah. We went through a distributor. They paid for everything, put it all together really.
Whose idea was Demonstration Tapes? *It seems like secretly, while you'd been having all this trouble with record companies, you'd been making these tapes by yourselves...*
Most of our songs, when we wrote them, we'd try to demo them. Polydor paid for us to demo loads of songs; much of the album came from that, though we never got the record deal.
Did they come from specific sessions? Would you do several songs at a time?
We would. The Polydor ones we did eight songs, I think. We managed to save up to do quite a few as the songs came on. We always tried to get them down on tape. Not all of them, but a lot of them.
How many copies were printed?
I think we did 1,000 in the end. Printed them in Debsey's attic, got ink all over the floor. It was quite weird to think we did all that and they got all over the place.
I read about the Dolly Mixture 16-millimeter movie in NME. *Did that ever get completed?*
It did. And we've been trying to get hold of a copy. The only copy we've got jumps halfway through. You can watch half of it. This film crew followed us around for about two years, turning up everywhere. It was a bit of a pain in the ass at the time. They'd show up at a gig, film us doing the gig, getting in and out of the van. And then a few funny bits they got us to do. And they used to turn up at *Top of the Pops* when we were doing that. And then they made it into a film.
Has it been shown anywhere?
As far as I know, it hasn't. We went to its premiere, and there were a few people down to see that. We were cringing all the way through. But someone said they saw it on something. They also made a video to "Remember This." If we could get in touch with them and get copies, that would be wonderful. They're probably either still working for the BBC or making films somewhere.
The 1984 demo tapes you dubbed me...did those happen after Demonstration Tapes *came out? Were there ever plans to release them?*
Again, they were just demos. We were going to try again with another record company.
Are there any songs that you never recorded that you wish you had?
I don't think so. I don't think there were any brilliant ones.
So what did you do – other than raise 3 kids, of course – between the time Dolly Mixture broke up and the beginnings of Fruit Machine and Sex Love Buster Baby?
I've always helped Captain with his stuff, quite a lot of work on most of his records. Bits. And I didn't really keep up with cello. Otherwise, it was just singing with children around school.
Sheila: Did you still play guitar?
Yeah.
At what point did you realize you wanted to play in a band again?
It was about three years ago maybe. I really wanted to get back into doing something. I'd been thinking about it for awhile. Sex Love Buster Baby had just lost their bass player, so I said I'd do that. I'd never played bass before.
What were Sex Love Buster Baby like?
Very quirky, I guess you'd say. We made our own single and put it out. So that was really good writing songs and stuff, I enjoyed that. But it wasn't really my sort of thing. About a year and a half ago, I really wanted to do my own songs and get my own band together. But Fruit Machine is far more related to Dolly Mixture.
Sheila: Did you get "Fruit Machine" from Jane of the Mo-Dettes?
(laughs) We were trying to think of a name for ages. We were called Ray for awhile – not after (Captain), because that's his name. We just spent ages trying to think of a name. It's so difficult.
Do you play out often?
We'd had sort of good reaction from people. Jenny's got a really nice voice, and the songs are getting better. It's really good to sort of get back into serious writing. We've been making our own tapes so far, and we've had quite a lot of response so far...
Whose idea was it to cover "How Come You're Such A Hit With The Boys, Jane?"
Jenny suggested doing a Dolly Mixture song, and we thought about it and thought that would be a fun one to do.
How did you get in touch with Martin Newell?
Well, Cap knew him before he signed to A&M. He was actually working in a studio in Suffolk, and Martin lived nearby and happened to write some lyrics and stuff. So he's kept in touch from there. Discovering Martin was brilliant; he writes such good stuff. His poetry's really taken off here.
What are Fruit Machine's plans for the future? I'd imagine it'd be hard to tour with three kids.
Yeah, but Captain's really supportive. We're trying to split it a bit.
Do you have any other thoughts about Dolly Mixture? Are you happy at the response people still have to it?
It's quite bizarre, but it's really nice to think that all that time that we were writing songs and stuff, people still remember it. I just didn't realize it would get as far as the States. What we really wanted to do was to go in and make albums and tour; we never imagined being megastars, really, but go on a bit longer. It was always a struggle.
What are you listening to now?
I quite like a lot of stuff that's coming out. I love the Wannadies; I quite like the Cardigans. There just seems to be so many good things; I like Cast. Ash.
Sheila: Did you have a really close friendship with Debsey and Hester?
It was very close. Quite traumatic at times.

The next evening we met Debsey Wykes in the Medicine Bar, a cozy pub in Islington. We found her sitting at a window table sipping club soda with lemon and reading a book. She was wearing the black-and-white polka-dotted coat as on the cover of Saint Etienne's Too Young To Die. *She had a present for me: a vinyl copy of* Demonstration Tapes, *specifically copy #895. My most holy grail of rare post-punk records, hand-delivered by a band member!*

In the early 1990s, Debsey turned up as an occasional vocalist for Saint Etienne, first singing lead on their "Who Do You Think You Are?" single (and appearing in the video with Sarah Cracknell), later contributing backing vocals on Tiger Bay's *"Former Lover" and "Pale Movie." She was also a vocalist on the band's 1994 North American tour. Saint Etienne's Bob Stanley, of course, later released* Demonstration Tapes *on CD on his label Royal Mint. So we knew what she'd been doing recently, but what had she been up to in that empty space between the end of Dolly Mixture and "Who Do You Think You Are?" Such questions weighed on our heads as we sat down with our pints of Guinness (me) and cider (Sheila). I asked Debsey a lot of the same questions as Rachel to see if they would respond differently – hopefully it isn't too redundant. Debsey and Rachel are both way too self-effacing about most things Dolly Mixture-related, but maybe that's because they lived the songs and are thus unobjective. As soon as we were done, Sheila and I went to see Bis and the Raincoats play at the London U.L.U. Welcome to the perfect day, indeed.*

Did you take music classes, or were you in bands before Dolly Mixture?

Not really. I had some piano lessons when I was a teenager. Hester and I did some backing vocals in this group that did one gig at school, and then we split up and formed Dolly Mixture. We didn't play anything at all, we couldn't play our instruments. We just formed a band. I said I wanted to play guitar, and Hester claims that I said she had to play drums, but she said her hands weren't big enough to play anything else. So what could we do? And then Rachel started playing the bass, but she could play a bit of guitar already. So we swapped in the end. I just couldn't get the hang of the guitar for a long time.

What made you go from backing vocals? Was it just logical?

It was just for fun, the backing vocal thing. We wanted to do something. But I think secretly we always wanted to play properly.

What inspired you in terms of people you were listening to, people you know, etc.?

I think we had a pretend group. That's what I remember. Apart from it being the sort of thing you just wanted to do anyway, because everyone seemed to be in bands and it just seemed a wonderful thing to do. I always wanted to be a really amazing guitarist, probably going back to listening to heavy metal…

Sheila: How awesome!

It wasn't cool, heavy metal, at the time, of course. It was just sort of Led Zeppelin, people I had fancies of playing guitar like. And Blondie. They quite made us want to get up and do something.

Were you listening to a lot of '60s music at the time? I was looking at the set lists, and they're full of '60s covers.

Yeah, I think we listened to more and more as the band went on. When we first started, we had two albums of '60s songs, and that was it, really. Obviously I remember a lot from childhood, but it wasn't the immediate thing at all. We didn't know what we were doing. It just happened as the months went by; people would play us things and say "oh, you've got to listen to this."" We would just find things out, hear things that suited us and started fitting in.

Did you name yourselves after the candies?

Hester was the one who thought of it. She just said, "We need to be called something like 'Dolly Mixture.'" And we went, "That's it!" She probably got it from there, but she must have had some sort of idea.

It seems like early on in Dolly Mixture's career record labels started paying attention. Chrysalis signed you up early on, right?

It was quite early on…there's my friend, the father of my child! *(Debsey's boyfriend Paul arrives)* This is Sheila, this is Mike. They both look too young to be Dolly Mixture fans…So about a year and a half after we formed, we started playing in London, and then people used to come and see us. There were a few people around offering this and that. We were quite a novelty in the papers. We got quite a lot of attention. And they eventually signed us up, but we never got signed by anyone who ever did anything for us, or ever understood us.

I read they had very specific ideas of what they wanted you to play and look like.

Definitely. It was sort of what they thought Dolly Mixture was or should be. They just wanted us to be sweet and "play that song, you've got to look like this" sort of thing. They didn't take us as people with any idea about ourselves at all.

What did people make of you? There weren't a lot of bands like Dolly Mixture in 1979 or 1980.

Practically everyone we met had a different idea of what we were meant to be doing, whereas we were completely "huh?" I don't think we really knew what we were doing at all. People were always projecting onto us all the time, having fantasies about three girls or…we had short skirts, so they were a bit pissed off when we got into knee-length skirts and wooly jumpers. It was always frustrating, constantly. Hester used to get particularly pissed off because she was the smallest with the roundest face and sweetest-looking. And she became the most aggressive because she got so fed up with people saying she looked like she was 12 years old.

What were your early shows like?

I think we used to be quite good, but fall apart sometimes. I remember we used to start songs and then grind to a halt. And then, of course, people said that "you need to do *that* all the time…oh don't get *too* good, girls…"

Didn't your manager used to say things like that? I read that he wouldn't let you play certain songs, things like that…

I remember that we were always in battle. We were fighting them to do our own songs. So we did a double-A-side. I don't know who decided on what version.

What was it like working with Eric Faulkner?

It was really nice. We stayed at his house for a few days, and had to cook him supper and things like that.

He didn't have a private cook?

He had some girls living there, but we were using their bedroom, so we had to do it. He was nice, though. He was good with us, sort of drilled us.

The Chrysalis thing only lasted…

One record, yeah. Then they got rid of us and we were so pleased. We could start again; we had been through so much trouble and almost split up ourselves during that time. We were just getting so fed up I don't know how well we thought we were going to do. I think we lost faith. And I'd been ill before that single came out. It all got depressed, which didn't suit it at all.

Then you were on Respond.

That was quite a lot later, about a year on. But we supported the Jam by accident. Somebody canceled and suggested us to stand in. So we played this gig and everybody liked it. And so Paul Weller (sic) said, "Oh, we're not promising anything, maybe support us at the Hammersmith Odeon, tough gig, think you can handle it, 5,000 Jam fans?" *(she says this in a hilarious Paul Weller impression that the printed page can't do justice)* and all that. Of course we would do it! Eventually, I think his parents got quite keen on us, probably more than Weller himself. His mum was lovely. We just thought we'd do quite well (on Respond), I suppose. But we didn't.

Was that ever frustrating? What were your goals as Dolly Mixture?

I think our goal was to be as big as the Undertones, to play the same size venues as they did, and to be songwriters – it's still my goal – to make my living writing songs for the rest of my life. We were really serious about our songwriting. Some people noticed, like Captain, and Paul Weller to an extent.

How did you meet Captain?

He just turned up one night and liked it. He used to turn up with various people, odd people from the heyday of punk. Punk was over, really, by then. And then he said "*I'll* produce your demo." So we did a demo with him; we liked working with him, and when we got the record contract, we chose him to produce us. Then he and Rachel fell in love, eventually. But she'd have to tell you about that.

She did. We heard all about it. But what I didn't ask is whether Captain Sensible had a big role in how those songs sounded.

He was good with us because everything he suggested, he wouldn't do if we didn't like it. He'd listen to us. But he was quite good with the sounds we were getting, Rachel's guitar sound particularly.

Was he the one who put the bells on "Everything and More?"

I put the bells on. That was great fun: huge, clanging tubular things.

But you'd also been recording demo tapes all the while?

Every once in awhile, yes.

When did you decide to put them out?

About the same time as the "Remember This" single, actually. This must have been about 1983, quite late on. So that was on our own label. We just couldn't get anybody to sign us. Nobody would take an interest in us. Or they would and it never came off. So in the end, we wanted to put that single out. And the person who ran that distribution thing, he just stressed at putting these together. And we thought it was a good idea. We never, ever planned to do it; I don't think any of us thought of it.

How long did it take to stamp and sign all those covers?

It took a long time. Nothing dried, so we couldn't just shove it in a pile. There was just a room floating in these things, and we had to let them dry and start the next 40.

Did you ever feel like you were leading this double life, appearing on Captain Sensible's singles as a backing vocalist and then having your own band?

Yes, to an extent. We used to feel like he had a lot more fun than we did. We went to this music convention in Cannes once, and at the opening party we were held up at the door. Things like that. There was always this sort of "well, what do *you* three want?" Because we weren't official people; we were just the people he wanted to work with, and nobody took any notice of us. I think we felt that quite a lot. And we were shoved up the hill to a cheaper motel. I mean, some people were really good to us.

Because you and Rachel often speak in these terms of...almost disappointment about the band.

Oh, we were. We were constantly disappointed. It was just so frustrating not being able to work on it all the time and just to be able to put records out. Just everything everyone else wants to do. We just thought that we should be doing it. It just didn't keep happening.

But there was also this rapid improvement. You went from choosing up instruments to writing these complex, well-written songs... **(Debsey makes a skeptical face)** ***You don't think so?***

I suppose we took to it quite easily, but there's only a few people around like you who remember. We still secretly think it's quite good, even though we play it really badly. The playing and the singing is not that good, but I think the songs are quite good.

What bands or musicians did you feel an affinity with while you were together?

I think most of the time we were obsessed with the Undertones. We toured with them – now there was a highlight, that wasn't a disappointment. That was brilliant. We had 11 nights in a row listening to their set standing by the side of the stage; it was just too much! That's what was really the ultimate at the time. Just off other things, really; no other bands. I don't think we considered we were quite as good as them.

Debsey at the Medicine Bar, Islington.

So what was the rivalry between Dolly Mixture and the Mo-Dettes, anyway?

They just absolutely hated us because we existed, and that's all we know. We just kept reading that we were a disgrace to women in music, or they hated us. We made friends with the drummer *(June)* a bit later, because she used to play with Fun Boy Three and we went on tour with them. I remember her being really friendly.

Paul: What did she think of that song?

Debsey: We weren't doing it at the time. But nobody knew what it was about.

So it wasn't common knowledge who "Jane" was?

No, not at all. We were far too discreet.

How did you split up songwriting? Was it collaborative?

At the beginning it was often all three of us. After awhile, Rachel would come up with a tune that she could sing or I would come up with one. And we'd write the words with Hester, or occasionally write them ourselves. But Hester wrote most of the lyrics. But we wrote to suit our own voices, because we had such different voices. We couldn't sing each other's songs at all.

Sheila: You can't really tell. Actually, I thought it was all you.

Paul: I thought that, too, before I knew your voice.

Debsey: That's interesting. No, we couldn't sing each other's songs to save our lives. If one of us had a bad throat, we couldn't stand in.

I also read about a Dolly Mixture movie?

Yeah, over a long time. It was a half-hour program for television which never got on. But it was quite funny.
Paul: Have you seen it?
No. Rachel said even she doesn't have a copy.
Debsey: We've got some of it on tape.
Paul: It's brilliant. It's like *This Is Spinal Tap*.
Debsey: When we went to see it...they played it at a place in Piccadilly, some film place. We went to watch it, and within minutes we were just in hysterics. It's the funniest thing in the world. It's quite sad, but it's hilarious. There's behind-thescenes footage and it's so embarrassing. It's like, "Now Rachel, we want to see you making a cup of tea and we want you to burn yourself on the kettle," and then Rachel would say, "and then us pretending to watch ourselves with the aerial!" "No, no, no..." And there are some bits that aren't made up, all sorts of things. And there's a bit of us on stage as well. And bits of interviews.
Sheila: Is it really fun to watch that stuff?
It is, actually. I just thank God we're not there now. But it's nice to just see how we behaved.
Paul: We're trying to track down a full copy, because the one we have is jumpy.
You made a video for "Remember This," too. What was that like?
It had a sort of crappy story mixed in with bits of us playing. All the videos in those days had storylines. It had absolutely nothing to do with the song at all. It was all about Hester taking a driving test. I've no idea why.
Was there a specific song that really came close to you ideal?
For me, personally, there's a song that we play really badly – and I say *really* badly, but I like the song – "Never Let It Go." That was the song that I was most pleased with. I couldn't sing it to save my life, that was the trouble. "Wave Away" was the other one. Those are the ones that I did that I'm most pleased by. There's a couple of Rachel's that are beautiful.
At what point did you get more into cello and piano arrangements?
We started doing it for fun. Well, Rachel and I made Hester a tape for one of her birthdays, just us playing popular songs on piano and cello. Just to make them sound ridiculous, really. Then we started coming up with soupy tunes and Radio 2-sounding things. So we started putting them on B-sides. We almost had more fun doing those.
Is that how **The Fireside** *came together?*
Yes, that was just a bunch of those. We couldn't do it very well, but we just loved doing it.
Rachel made me a tape of some 1984 songs: "Now When I Count," "Dust To Dust." Why did those never come out on record?
I don't think there was room on it. And we split up. I don't know. Bob Stanley was going to put them out, but then we never got that far. He used to have a label called Caff. Then he changed his mind. It ended up that we just put *Demonstration Tapes* out again.
How did you meet Bob Stanley, and how did he come to put **Demonstration Tapes** *out?*
I just read one day in the papers that he was a Dolly Mixture fan, and that he and Pete used to come see us play later on. And I was at loose ends, so I just tried to get in touch with him over the next few months to say that I'd like to meet him and work with him or anything. Oh, and he also wrote a review of my other band that we did after Dolly Mixture, so I just thought he would be a good person to get in contact with, just to get into the music business again. I wasn't doing anything, really, by then.
And he invited you to sing on "Who Do You Think You Are?"
That was originally going to be on their own label, it wasn't going to be Saint Etienne at all. But I think people liked it, so it turned into a Saint Etienne single. We did loads of touring. That's how I met Paul; he's the guitarist. It was (Paul's) idea (to release *Demonstration Tapes*); he just said "Get Bob to do it!" And Bob said "Yeah!...cool!" or something like that.
Paul: And then it took him about a year to do it.
So Dolly Mixture broke up because...
Debsey (singing): "Rachel-hadda-baby..." I think we all secretly knew that it had been going on too long and we weren't getting anywhere, really. We were all a bit tired of it.
And you said you and Hester had a band afterward?
We had a band called Coming Up Roses. We did it for about four years after that. We didn't really get going until about 1986, and then we split up in the beginning of '91. We weren't total crap. We started off wanting to be really sort of jazzy. That was our thing. We just wanted to change everything completely. We wanted to have a huge, great female band and go off on a train, and have brass and do extraordinary jazzy things. The reality was much more pathetic. But it was a similar sort of thing. We never had as much attention as Dolly Mixture, but we always had something to keep us going. Somebody was already interested or said the songs were good.
Did Coming Up Roses have any records out?
Only one. That was on Billy Bragg's label. Six tracks.
Wow. I've never even heard of this.
I'm not surprised. It does exist. I don't like it very much. I liked it at the time. It was a bit...I don't think we knew what we were doing. We had so many personnel changes. I think Billy Bragg and his manager thought we had something, that was the thing. We were never quite sure what we had, really. I mean, we started again from scratch, for some reason taking on people who couldn't play at all. For some reason, I thought I could teach them to play enough.
Was Saint Etienne right after that?
About a year and a half on from then. I did nothing for awhile, then I started doing odd jobs and an evening drama course. And then...when's that Christmas gig that we did, 1992? That September I think I did "Who Do You Think You Are," recorded it with Bob and Pete. And then I did backing vocals for their Christmas party. And then the following year, we went on tour, did a couple of Top Of The Pops and went to Japan. And then the following year after that, we did even more.
How do you like working with Saint Etienne?
Oh, it was good. It was just long enough. By the end of 1994, we went to Japan; that was Saint Etienne's last live dates for awhile. They were all going on to do various things. Paul and I decided to do a group together. So that's the latest project. We've been calling it "Birdie" for now, but we might not call it that. We started working together, and then we started living together...
Paul: So far a lot of it sounds like the Velvet Underground meets French film music.
Debsey: One of the songs sounds like the Zombies, somebody said.

Paul: Quite mellow, kind of guitarry but mellow at the same time.

Sheila: Are you still working with Saint Etienne?

Well, they haven't been doing anything, so the issue hasn't come up. Bob's very happy; he's got his own record label. He keeps going abroad to do various things. He's really busy.

We saw the video for "Who Do You Think You Are?" the other night. I didn't know you two traded off vocals.

She had to sing, really, because she was their singer. They couldn't sort of completely dump me because I had already recorded it. But I must say (Paul and my) stuff is what I'm happiest with of all. But I suppose everyone says that.

It must be strange answering questions about a band you were in 16 years ago.

It's odd. It's quite nice, because I don't think we ever got enough attention. I'm just glad we're not living it anymore. ...It's funny, because when we used to do interviews, Hester was the one who answered most of the time.

And you still keep in touch with Rachel and Hester, right?

Mostly Rachel. No one can get in touch with Hester very easily. She's always busy. But Rachel and I talk every now and again. ...It wasn't all terrible! We used to have a lot of laughs. We did sometimes, but there were all those days in between for years and years.

Paul: I'm surprised that you talk about it like a horrible situation sometimes. It doesn't come across in the music. And the film doesn't come across that way, although it's kind of a tragedy. It doesn't come across as a depressing, downer thing.

Sheila: The music's really upbeat and happy.

Yeah. The lyrics aren't, I'd say that. I remember arriving to rehearse with the others one day, and they said, "Right, we've written the words to this song. Now, we've written a positive song..." And that was "Grass Is Greener." They actually made a real effort, when they put the words to that...you know, "the grass is greener on *my* side of the fence!" I suppose it's the whole thing of, you just leave school and you're suddenly expected to march. You're saying "if only..." and then everything is in weird shape. And you're still idealistic, you have such dreams. People have depressed when they go to college, don't they? I hear. Some people do.

I guess it has to be a real shock, at 19 or 20, to form this band and all of sudden have to deal with lawyers and managers and people who presume they know what you're doing when they don't.

It's just being thrown into an arena you don't know anything about and you think, "Oh, I thought I was right about this." We weren't the most confident of people. We weren't three mouthy, streetwise, confident people. We just had our own little world and we arrived in London. It was just growing up, really. And being so ambitious and not being thwarted all the time.

Did that make you try to improve? Again, I hear an incredible progression from beginning to end.

Oh, no. I can see it developing. Oh, there's a song on there that we do a *really* terrible version of: "In Your Eyes." I love that one.

Paul: What's your favorite?

"Side Street Walker." I love that one. That's the song that got me into Dolly Mixture.

Paul: Have you ever heard Lena Averone? She did a cover of "Will He Kiss Me Tonight?" and "Dream Come True."

Debsey: There's a real fake Phil Spector sort of sound.

Were you listening to a lot of Phil Spector? A lot of the songs have that influence.

Oh, yes. At the time we just played the Ronettes, Phil Spector and the Shangri-Las. We were just obsessed. Before we were obsessed with the Undertones.

You were compared to Burt Bacharach, too. Which doesn't become obvious until later.

I don't know if it *would* be obvious. Hester had some Dusty Springfield and Dionne Warwick albums that we used to listen to all the time.

Sheila: What was the best thing about being in Dolly Mixture?

Doing all the good things. Being able to go in the studio. Having a life that was different, I suppose, thinking back on it. It was our own adventure, even though it wasn't always great. I loved being on stage and meeting people.

Sheila: What were your favorite DM songs to play live?

I used to really like doing "Dead Rainbow." We used to do it at the end of the set. It isn't on the album...

Mike: Rachel made me a tape. It's great.

Have you got it on tape? Oh, that's good. We used to love doing that. And "Grass Is Greener," because that was simple, an easy one. Not the ones where you had to do something funny with your voice to sing a difficult bit. There's a lot of work to do for three people. Luckily, we always did things live first, so we never had to translate things into playing live.

DOLLY DISCOGRAPHY:

"New Look Baby" / "Baby It's You" (Chrysalis 45, 1980)
"Beenteen" / "Honky Honda" / "Ernie Ball" (Respond 45, 1981)
"Everything And More" / "You And Me On The Sea Shore" (Respond 45, 1982)
"Remember This" / "Listening Pleasure" / "Borinda's Lament" (Dead Good Dolly Platters 45, 1983)
Demonstration Tapes (Dead Good Dolly Platters double LP, 1983)
The Fireside (Cordelia 12" EP, approx. 1985)
Demonstration Tapes (Royal Mint CD, 1996)

Also of interest: *Dolly Mixture Live At The Bridgehouse February 1981* (Detour bootleg cassette). Fair-to-poor quality live recording. Includes otherwise unreleased originals ("Dolly Mixture Theme," "Foxy Foxy," " "Dead Rainbow," "Shoparound") and covers ("I Didn't Know I Loved You ['Til I Saw You Rock 'N Roll]," "Leader Of The Pack," "The Loco-Motion")

Unreleased recordings:
"Now When I Count," "Down The Line," "Our Tune," "The Same Mistake" and "Dust To Dust" (1984 demos)
"Femme Fatale" (demo, unknown date of origin)
"Dolly Mixture Theme" and "Dead Rainbow" (BBC sessions, unknown date of origin).

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Publications

5/6/96 and *The Stomping Snooper* #1 *($1.00 apiece c/o Gilmore Tamny, PO Box 8072, Columbus, OH 43201)*: Gilmore has gained musical recognition as half ofThe Yips, but I'll always think of her as a zine editor at heart, since my first exposure to her creativity was through *Wiglet* zine. Thankfully, she hasn't neglected her writing skill amongst her musical pursuits. *5/6/96* is exactly what its title implies, an eight-page record of thoughts, whims and observations while sitting in front of the typewriter one afternoon/early evening. The cover is covered with squiggly orange stamps, which is a nice touch. *The Stomping Snooper* is longer and packed with essays, poetry, and even parlour games. My favorite pieces were the "Temp Job Diary" ("Wednesday: nothing to say. Thursday: even less even.") and "Hating You, Hating Me," a horrifying (and horrified) account of parental abuse. Both zines are typewritten and presented in a cut-and-paste style - an approach that's in danger of fading away as everyone gets computers, and well worth preserving. Coupled with the Yips' two fine Siltbreeze albums,Gilmore Tamny is someone whose work you shouldn't ignore.

A Dirty Mag (L1 c/o Julian, 20 Queen St., Stamford, Lincs PE9 1QS): A typewritten and pasted-up gem. Like a lot of my favorite British fanzines, it wraps up passion, memories, snippets from favorite songs, quotes from favorite books and into one articulate, inspiring and slightly rambling package. Subjects include the Go-Betweens' "Cattle and Cane" single, Stephin Merritt's songwriting, Felt, Nick Kent's book *The Dark Stuff*, James Ellroy, Raymond Carver, "hand-me-down punk discos (one of those uniquely British things, I assume), and the late and lamented *Debris* zine. Simply imbued with care, thought and effort.

A Nest of Ninnies #5 *(available through Matador or Ajax; "inquiries" to feste@jhunix.hcf.jhu.edu):* A stunning revival of the late-80s mean fanzine style, complete with an endless Robert Nedelkoff interview for chrissakes. What's next, the return of Torky Koenings? I find *ANON* amusing in places and occasionally I'll discover a fact or two, but mostly I get bad flashbacks of such archival nasty titles as *Strange Affair* and *The Ugly American*. I found the people who did these zines to be alienating back when they were onmipresent, and I don't like them much more a decade later.

Baby, I Dig You #3 and #4 *($3 apiece c/o Sara Lorimer, PO Box 382492, Cambridge, MA 02238-2492)*: I really like the travel-oriented direction Sara's taken with her zine. Issue #3 contained her Prague tour diary, and #4 chronicles her move to Boston from Olympia. To get there, Sara drove cross-country with her boyfriend Oliver. *BIDY* #4 contains both of their tour diaries, allowing us to see both sides of things - their vague relationship, their impressions of the trip, and their general attitudes about and desires from life. Reading about their insecurities, their conflicting directions, the frantic sex they had in motel rooms (as if time was running out, which of course it was), it sounds like this was an emotionally draining trip for them both. In fact, displacement and insecurity seem to be this issue's twin themes - the other two pieces are an article about truck-stop prostitutes, and a series of letters from Darin Johnson about living and working in South Korea. The whole package is wrapped in a snazzy red hand-silkscreened cover. Sara's moving to New York City this summer, meaning the moving/adaptation process will start all over again.

Badaboom Gramaphone #2 ($5.00 c/o Ben Goldberg, PO Box 204, Leonia, NJ 07605; badabinh@aol.com): After one year, a new job and a move to Chapel Hill, Ben's finally published a new *Badaboom Gramophone* . Issue #2 emerges as a 132-page perfect-bound mass of opinions, reviews and research, mixing the typical interview/review format with a scholarly, exploratory approach. The central piece in issue #2 is Michael Peter's a long interview with Petr Kotik, new music composer and director of Brooklyn's S.E.M. Ensemble. Kotik comes across as a brilliant figure, imposing at first but eager to speak at great length about his work and where he fits in amongst the pantheon of modern classical composers. Peter even gets to come along with Kotik on a late-night S.E.M. flyering expedition. Mike Wolf contributes a condensed history of New Zealand's rock scene - focusing of course on the post- "Tally Ho!" underground scene, but also touching on the country's '50s and '60s luminaries. Franklin Bruno discusses the aesthetics of recording and songwriting, while Spent's Ed Radich points to *Moby Dick* and *Apocalypse Now* to illustrate the experience of being in a touring band. Ben himself interviews Silkworm, spriknkles record reviews throughout the magazine, and relates his tale of working in radio promotion for a NYC major label (are you surprised that his experience was hellish and exhausting?). There's lots more covered in *Badaboom Gramophone* - Star Wars, Billy Childish, Swans' early recordings, etc. - and the package is completed with a 12-song CD.

Boa #5 (L1 c/o Gayle Harrison, Flat 2L, 1011 Cathcart Road, Mount Florida, Glasgow G42 9XJ, Scotland): Right up the street from the Mount Florida train station, one flight up a spiral staircase, lies *Boa* HQ. The action never stops there: It's a label! It's an eight-track recording studio! It's where Gayle and John record under the name Electroscope! It's home to at least one of the Delgados! Most of all it's the home of *Boa* fanzine, one of my very favorites, one of the only music zines that strikes a perfect balance between useful information and raving enthusiasm. Gayle and John are constantly digging up new bands -their review section is up there with *Popwatch* and *For Paper Airplane Pilots* in terms of reliability. Issue #5 includes an interview with Suzanne Rhatigan, a former member of Epic Records' roster turned Boa Records artiste. I remember seeing Suzanne in an MTV Networks lobby playing rather bland protoSheryl Crow tunes; it's fascinating to me that she's turned up here, and encouraging that she had the wisdom and courage to just step off the major label hype machine and do what she wants. John briefly interviews Calvin Johnson about independent labels and the Dub Narcotic conglomerate; he also contributes an appreciation of This Heat. Stephen Drennan chips in with a piece about Movietone, and David Brogan runs down the roster of Michigan pop label Quiddity. The whole package is rounded out with the usual insightful reviews. I always read *Boa* with a box of envelopes and a notebook nearby. You will too.

Boy Watch #4 ($2.00 c/o Elizabeth Chorney, Box 17, Site 30, RR #4, Calgary, AB T2M 4L4, Canada; chorneyc@cadvision.com): Hello Kitty's All-Star Pajama Party returns with a new, improved name, and a continued emphasis on the best of the Canadian music scene. Interviews this issue include Sloan, Zumpano, Plumtree, Taut and non-Canadian Lou Barlow. Arif Ansari contributes a story about a semi-disastrous lunch with Jale and their promo rep, and Joe Chan offers some short fiction. Elizabeth rounds off the whole package is rounded off with random bits about double dates with local bands, fashion tips for boys (I'm on my way to buy a mod suit right now) and starting trends.

Breakfast Candy #1 ($1.00 c/o Alissa Bader c/o The Girly-Grrrl Media Collective, PO Box 231, Peter Stuyvesant Station, New York, NY 10009-0231, molbloo@interport.net): Junk food, Bat Mitzvah and teen goth memories, thrift-store recordings, and a healthy appreciation for the Krispy Kreme Donuts on 23rd St (the one thing I miss about my old neighborhood).

*Brown*Star #2 ($3.00 c/o Craig John Warren, PO Box 219, Newtown, NSW 2042, Australia):* Craig recently moved to Australia after a stint in London as a freelance journalist. The experience embittered him enough to comment on it in his introduction, but it also fueled his resolve to make *Brown*Star* more than just another review/interview fanzine plugging the latest musical products. I was fairly blown away by his latest issue, which touches on "pop, sex, TV, football, culture" with equal eloquence. Craig interviewed the famous Nichols brothers, David and Michael, focusing as much on their "generosity" and their Australian peers as on whatever records they've been involved with. Likewise, there is a review of a book about the Portsmouth punk scene, but it's really a jumping-off point for Craig to talk about his formative years in

Portsmouth and what inspired him to form a band, write a fanzine, and eventually leave town. Excellent stuff. For the issue's centerpiece, Craig asked people to write about the 1970s, what was inspirational about the decade and what they remembered about it. His contributors - a quality group including Stephen Drennan, David Nichols, Al Hoff (*Thrift Score*), Andrea B. and Fergus Paget (Garden of Delights Records), and Mary PhillipsSandy (*Kelp*) - come up with vastly different perspectives, but it's all illuminating and goes far beyond simple nostalgia. There are also some zine reviews and a piece on Australian football. A richly rewarding publication.

Busboy #5 (c/o Emily Walker, PO Box W-624, Columbus, MS 39701): Another issue of Emily's fanzine, which doesn't nearly come out often enough. Issue #5 includes some well-written zine and record reviews, as well as live reviews that are written in a pleasant journal form. I love it when reviewers write about not only the show they saw, but how they got there, what happened on the way to the venue, and the people they met, don't you? The rest of the issue is dedicated to Emily's trip to Italy, complete with pasted-in color photos. For those of you who can't get enough of her writing, Emily's also planning a side project called *Bookish and Proud*, dedicated to bound works and all their qualities.

Clunker #5 ($3.00 c/o Todd Stosuy, RPO 1872, PO Box 5063, New Brunswick, NJ 08903): I actually enjoyed this a lot more than the split Todd did with *Whitebread*; it's funnier, more insightful, and even more personal, if that's imaginable. Even when he's directly insulting people, he has this refreshing self-awareness that the same insults could be applied to him, too. In this issue you can read about Todd's hygiene, his roommates, the girlfriend he dated for most of the summer, his unpleasant experiences at the Indie-Rock Flea Market, the vacation he took with his family, and far more. If you've seen *Clunker* before, you already know to expect minute details of everything that happens in Todd's life, and they're here in abundance.

Crazy Rhythms #1 and #2 *($150 c/o Jesse Fuchs, Box 9146, Denver, CO 80209)*: On one hand, Jesse is a good, polished writer with strong opinions and a good grasp of music theory, and he writes decent pieces on Pylon, Nervus Rex and Incredible String Band. On the other hand, I can't help but think he's focusing too much energy on being Robert Christgau Jr., overrating crap like Kingmaker and Carter The Unstoppable Sex Machine, spending an entire page comparing Wire's *Pink Flag* to Creedence Clearwater Revival, throwing around rockcrit slang like "keybs." I just don't think we need another one of these; I guess I'd prefer he was trying to emulate Greil Marcus or Jon Savage. Still, I prefer this approach to yet another collection of "this is good, buy it" reviews. I have to comment how annoyed I was by the Eric Weisbard interview in issue #2, though. It literally infuriated me in places, not because of any weaknesses on Jesse's part but because of Eric's continual assertion that there is inherently a gulf between "public" and "private" pleasures. He actually says of some of his favorite records, "I obviously don't think they're worthless, but I've had to acknowledge based on the response of the rest of the world that they're very personal favorites." Eric knows better, or at least he should; as a former WPRB DJ, he's well aware of how obscure records can go on to influence the culture at large. He goes on to talk about his frustration with the "anti-intellectualism" that pervades rock criticism, and while I agree with him there, I wonder whether it's a symptom of the whole notion of writing about music, and how music makes you feel. You can apply all the semiotics you want to a record, you can place it in whatever historical or political context you want, but ultimately that record will mean nothing to you if it doesn't have that oft-intangible something that hooks you - a good melody, insightful or witty lyrics, a certain energy, the way the guitars sound, whatever. It's a far slipperier thing to analyze than a book or film, and often incredibly frustrating (not that I'm doing any kind of job eliminating the "cruddy thought and cruddy writing" Eric dislikes, mind you). Lester Bangs was well-read and full of theory, but he also knew that his private pleasures *should* be public, dammit, and he did a lot to popularize the obscure things he loved. He *made* them public. I just hate to see Eric trivialize the music he loves, call it insignificant if no one else pays attention. Is this what working as a rock critic for a living does to you?

(Having looked this review over, I suddenly realized that *Crazy Rhythms* challenged me and made me think more than almost any other zine this time around. I guess that means I'm looking forward to #3.)

Daffodil #13 ($1.00/2 stamps or trade c/o Emily Lyon, PO Box 124, Willington, CT 06279): Emily bills this issue as a return to the poetry and short stories for which she started *Daffodil* in the first place. The centerpiece of the issue is "Tall Flower," a short story about truck stops, traveling and wishing that held my attention all the way to the end. My favorite line went "I like it here. It is people in transition. Everything is tentative." In fact, Emily seems obsessed by the transience of things, no doubt inspired by going off to college and making a dorm room her new home. The rest of #13 includes a few poems, a guide to getting free things (stickers, rubber stamps, dental floss), and excerpts from a 1950s craft magazine *called Pack-O-Fun.* Emily is also in the band Now We Are Six, runs a record label, and makes excellent 7" bowls: do write for details.

Dagger #21 ($3.00 c/o Tim Hinely, PO Box 7605, Santa Rosa, CA 95407-0605): Tim's been doing *Dagger* since he lived in New Jersey in the mid-1980s, and his writing and choice of coverage have slowly but steadily progressed over the years. *Dagger* circa 1997 is a spirited read with lots of humor and history; Tim's embraced Sarah-style pop music, finally stopped trying to emulate Gerard Cosloy (though it does peep up every now and then), and gotten better at putting his own tastes across rather than what people tell him is cool. Issue #21 includes interviews with Holiday, Hayden, Nord Express, Versus, and Mocket, as well as tons of reviews and the customary Desert Island Discs section (send Tim yours!).

Dementia Praecox #7 (43 Dalrymple St., Jamaica Plain, MA 02130): The latest issue of Brooke Scott's zine. #7 includes a few reviews of zines and children's books, but it functions mostly as a record of Brooke's thoughts as she moves out of adolescence and into paying rent, working and having a live-in boyfriend. It's a far cry from a couple of issues ago, when she and former co-editrix Joey were interviewing the Charlatans and stalking boys who looked like Blur members. Brooke describes her run-down neighborhood (where the neighbors drag swords on the street and have duels), the jobs she's had since moving to Boston, a couple pages about faeries, her various personal quirks and so forth. Brooke writes in a strange syntax - lower-case letters, very little punctuation -that I used to find unreadable, but I think I've gotten used to it now. Comes packaged in a gorgeous yellow satin cover with "*DP7*" glued on in glitter paint.

Double Whammy #3 ($2.00 c/o Gabby Warshawer, 235 E. 50th St. #3J, New York, NY 10022): I would appreciate it if you would kindly ignore the four pages that comprise Gabby's interview with me. Once you read it, you'll understand why I publish a fanzine instead of, say, doing a radio talk show. "I think... I think...I think...I think..." I'm going to take a public speaking course or something in case I ever get interviewed again. Luckily there's lots else in *DW*'s third issue to divert your attention: interviews with Kickstand and WFMU DJ Gaylord Fields, an extensive tribute to the TV Personalities, bits on Little Teddy Records and The I Live The Life Of A Movie Star Secret Hideout, and an extensive array of live and record reviews. Gabby's off to college in Minnesota this fall; I'll be sorry to see her go.

Fast Connection #3 ($2.00, PO Box 54, Heaton, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE6 5YW, UK): The third issue of this Slampt-produced organ, packed with information and resources as usual. Slampt gets a lot of flak for their staunch DIY stance - just ask Kenickie, who spent a whole song, "Punka," ragging on their former label - but they'd be the first to not only suggest that you start your own label if you don't agree, but also give you the resources with which to start that label. Issue #3 includes features on I'm Being Good, Lonely, Coping Saw, Ebola and Alternative TV (written by Steve Burt). There

are also pieces on vegetarianism, the evolution of riot grrrl in the U.K., the current hegemony of drum & bass, Australian indie music, and a practical guide to releasing your own 7". I always come away from each issue of *Fast Connection* with a new perspective on things. You will too.

Highest Population of Rock Stars* #7-#9 *($2.00 apiece c/o Amy Greenan, 1357 Sullivan Road, Alden, NY 14004): Amy used to live in Port Chester, N.Y. (home to one of the biggest Salvation Armies I've ever visited - three floors!). Now she lives near Buffalo, where she publishes this journal of reviews, interviews, thrift-store finds, memories and personal observations every few months or so. Certain themes, people and places keep popping up on a recurring basis: her part-time band the Dart Swingers, her former job as manager of The Beat (P.C.'s coolest indie-type bar), her theory of the "White Sneaker Guy" (write and ask), her friends from P.C. and NYC. What I like most about *HPRS* is its warmth and its sense of location and place - reading it is like being invited into a new town with a new circle of friends. Issue #7 includes an interview with Versus, a few reviews of comics and records, how she came out to her parents as bisexual, how she became interested in joining a band, and some journal entries from 1991, when she was 21. Issue #8 is a minizine written in the week following New Year's Eve 1996-1997, and is largely an account of how she spent the holiday and the thoughts and feelings that accompanied it. There's even a little map of P.C., should you care to take the Metro-North into town and see the place for yourself. Issue #9 chronicles Amy's road trips throughout the Northeast this past spring and includes a section on "zine crushes." Always funny and poignant, and something I always look forward to reading.

Hello, Sailor! #2 ($2.00, 207 Sullivan St. #5, New York, NY 10012, ahoysailor@aol.com): A friendly, informative music/nautical journal published by Julie Underwood ("Your Cruise Director") and Brendan Bourke ("First Mate"). Their second issue includes concise, fairly loose chats with the Lilys, Robert Forster, Neutral Milk Hotel, Vivian of Luscious Jackson, and none other than TV star Space Ghost. On the marine end, there are photos and brief descriptions from NYC's annual "Fleet Week" (that time of year each spring when sailors from across the globe converge on the city) and Brendan's piece on artist Paul Cadmus, known for his work "The Sailor Trilogy." In back, records are ranked between one anchor ("Titanic") and five ("Pacific Princess"). The whole package is wrapped up in a lovely seawater-blue cover.

#9
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Interrobang?! #3 $2.00 c/o Sharon Cheslow, 3288 21st St., Box 33, San Francisco, CA 94110, scheslo@muse.sfusd.k12.ca.us): *Interrobang?!* is an engaging, smart mix of music and opinions, focusing specifically on women in music. Issue #3 includes interviews with Nicole Panter and Aquarius Records proprietor Windy Chien, a short piece on Barbara Manning, a survey about the best music of summer 1996, photos by Gail Butensky, and pieces on anorexia and the age-old indie/major debate and how it applies to women. The centerpiece is a long list of women associated with the '70s punk scene, a continuation of a project Sharon-started in issue #2 and a projected "photographic and oral history." Her list includes pretty much all the significant players between 1975-1981; she invites her readers to submit additions and photographs. An admirable publication all around.

Jaboni Youth* #5 *($3.00 c/o Alec Bemis, 9 Rockhagen Road, Thornwood, NY 10594, alecjab@minerva.cis.yale.edu): This started out as a stopgap measure for editor Alec to publish all the reviews that didn't make it into issue #4; in fact, its original issue number was "4.5." It became the 92-page behemoth I'm thumbing through as I type this review. Other than Alec's introductory notes, a short and awkward Versus interview, a longer and more insightful Dave McGurgan interview, and an essay by Jason Morphew, it's all reviews: records, books, magazines, even the Sunday *New York Times*. I found it impossible to read this in one sitting - like the dictionary or the *World Almanac*, it works best as a reference tool. But as someone who often struggles to come up with a single adjective to describe even records I like (see this issue's Recordings section for ample proof), I also admire the discipline it takes to review a couple of hundred records and come up with at least semi-intelligent things to say about each. All the same, I'm looking forward to see *where Jaboni Youth* goes next - Alec says it will become "like *The Baffler*, only not quite as good."

Letter Bomb* #1 *($2.00 23 Keith Ave., Giffnock, Glasgow G46 61G, Scotland): Sci-Fi Steven's apparently not too busy with Bis to continue publishing his fanzine. *Letter Bomb* is the successor to his old title, *Paper Bullets*. It includes articles on favorite bands (Brainiac, The Make-Up, Blur), an analysis of digital hardcore, lots and lots of comic/record/zine reviews, and plenty of writing by Mousegurl, Teen-C Recordings co-owner and recording artist. For me, though, the most interesting pieces were the opening rants. "Too Much Music and How To Deal With It" questions British bands who look only to Britain, "never looking beyond the confines of their own country and ending up isolated," and "The Continuing Battle vs. The DIY Corps" is basically Steven's take on the indie-vs.-major debate and the many shades of gray involved. These are the only pieces in the zine directly taken from Steven's experiences in Bis, a band that was hyped to the stars in the UK only to fall from grace the moment the next novelty appeared.

Miss Mary Mack #5 ($1.00 c/o M. Vishmidt, One Mead Way, Bronxville, NY 10708): Marina's in exile this time out: she put the fifth *MMM* together while attending college in Oxford, though most of it seems to have been written in New York City just before she went away. As usual, Marina's prose is packed with 50-cent words, theories, cutting asides, pretension tempered by self-deprecation, occasional lapses into hip-hop slang, and of course lots of writing in the margins. There just aren't many other zine types who can match her love of language, of vernacular and non-sequitor and. In issue #5, Marina tackles '80s revivalism, the redemptive powers of elitism, Dean and DeLuca (where she worked in the summer of 1996), Elliot Smith, and much more. I especially liked her "Dope/Don't" column (e.g. Dope: "September *Vogue*"; Don't: "appendicitis on a plane"). I can only imagine what she'll have to say about her time at Oxford, as she says she's grown to hate the place. Someday Marina

will be hailed as the new Dorothy Parker, but don't wait!

Monorail ($2.00 c/o Steve Mandich, PO Box 10412, Portland, OR 97296-0412): Talk about "trainspotting." Steve Mandich takes a break from chronicling Evel Knievel's life and times in the excellent *Heinous* to produce *Monorail*, an entire zine dedicated to this underrated form of light-rail transport. "Despite its unfounded perception as the Edsel of the railways, (the monorail) has proven time and time again to be sensible, practical and efficient," Steve argues in the foreword. "There's (also) little doubt that monorails are, dare I say it, *cool*." So in his typically exhaustive fashion, he traces the monorail's evolution from its invention in the 1800s, through its 1960s heyday (with a particular emphasis on the Seattle Monorail that dazzled everyone at the 1962 World's Fair), up to its present-day applications at theme parks and airports. He devotes a chapter to monorail-related accidents, and lists the few extant monorail-related films (*It Happened At The World's Fair*), TV shows (an episode of *The Simpsons*), books and albums (Sun Ra's *Monorails and Satellites*). I recently had the chance to ride the Newark Airport monorail and found it quite a smooth, pleasant ride indeed; I especially loved the tiny compartments, so much smaller and more intimate than subways or buses. Steve is proving himself one of the small press's best writers and researchers; he's up there with Paul Lukas and John Marr in cultural observation and chronicling, and *Monorail* is a welcomed addition.

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Oh Oh Cheri #2 ($1.00 c/o Lara Cohen, PO Box 261, Merion, PA 19066-0261): As she closes in on the big 2-0, Lara worries about "whether I have anything to offer once the child prodigy game is up, and I'm not really looking forward to finding out," but if *Oh Oh Cheri* is any indication, she doesn't have to coast on youth alone (and never did, I'd argue). As the successor to *Runt*, it's quite the special, readable treat. There are short interviews with Honeybunch, the Haywains (sadly defunct now), and They Go Boom!, not to mention comics by David Nichols and a week-by-week diary of Lara's Beginning Social Dance class ("...the foxtrot is OK but I can't manage the Box Turn at all"). This issue's centerpiece is an extended section in which various musicians, writers and fans reminisce about their favorite bands that don't exist anymore. David Nichols discusses the Go-Betweens (he's written a book about them due out sometime soon); Bing Broderick remembers the June Brides; Claudia Gonson recalls going to local Boston bands and Game Theory, Jeff Smith pinpoints the importance of the early Raincoats, and Delia (better known as "Sparrow" to those of us with Internet accounts) describes shows by Talulah Gosh, the Flatmates, 14 Iced Bears; they sound so delectable that those of us who weren't there can only sigh. I'd go so far to say that *Oh Oh Cheri* #2 is a transition between Lara's teenage zine days and a more diverse, considered approach (I hesitate to say "mature"). Future issues should only get better.

100% (L1, Flat 2/2, 23 Bentinck St., Glasgow G3 7TS, Scotland; e-mail: 9359781m@student.gla.ac.uk): I bought it mostly for the Belle & Sebastian interview, but there's other worthwhile stuff in it as well: a long Bikini Kill interview (taken from another zine – hope they asked permission), a cartoon about seeing a BK show, and rants about groupies and porno. Nice color-xerox cover.

Peace & Quiet #1 (a few dollars to Guy Blackman, PO Box 4292, Melbourne University, Parkville, Vic 3052): Guy Blackman used to publish *Salty & Delicious* with his friend Richard, but hung it up when Richard bailed out. *Peace & Quiet* is Guy's solo project (with help from friends and various contributors. It's excellent. First of all, the size is unique and perfect: 8 ½" wide by 5 inches above, like a full-size mag cut in half. The pages are printed in bright blue, and there is a variety of fonts (including Guy's handwriting, if you can call handwriting a "font"). Inside is a striking mix of music writing (old and new music alike), art, travelogues and the odd personal digression. It's so jam-packed with information and words that, quite frankly, it's taken me awhile to get through it. The whole shebang begins with a 16-page review of Nunfest, Flying Nun's 1996 weeklong music festival in Auckland. There are interviews with The Frustrations, Stu and Gonzo from Crawlspace Records, Julian Williams (of From The Same Mother, Above Ground Pool and many other bands), Matthew Bannister (of Sneaky Feelings and Dribbling Darts of Love), the Furtips, Turnpike, Kitty Craft (by David Nichols) and Paul Lukas. There's also a piece on Nancy Sinatra, and short zine and record review sections. An essential guide to the Australian pop underground and beyond. Look for issue #2, featuring "My First Zine," in which various editors and publishers talk about their first issues.

Picnic #2 ($1.00 or L1 c/o Michaela, 8 Shaftesbury Road, London E17 9BP, England): Published by Lisa, who lived in Washington, D.C. and interned at Teenbeat for awhile; she was also a co-conspirator in *Die Right Now* zine (Michaela was her partner in crime, and continues to lend her address for a contact). Now she's returned to London and started a new zine with a far less threatening name. Issue #2 includes short survey-type interviews with Bridget Cross, Mark Robinson and Blast Off Country Style, and slightly longer chats with Lois, Jen Wolfe, and her roommate Sheila Burgel. Lisa and Missy Kulik both draw comics about hanging out in D.C. and visiting landmarks like Go Records (now defunct, to the East Coast's detriment) and the Tastee Diner. A fun, cheery read, one that reminds me both of DC and my very fun week in London.

Pop-Fly! #2 ($1.00 or so c/o Barbara McGuinness, PO Box 380432, Cambridge, MA 02238-0432; popfly@ix.netcom.com): Friendly, pleasantly rambling music-oriented zine with features on Orange Cake Mix, Names For Pebbles, Nerdy Girl, and "Why Tall Girls Can't Dance." Best of all, it comes with a game, "Pop-Fly! Land," complete with dice, game pieces and challenging cards ("Name the four cast members of *Scooby-Doo*," "Name three cool pop-oriented fanzines," "Do you have a secret crush? Advance 2 spaces"). Well worth checking out.

Popwatch #8 *($4.00 c/o Leslie Gaffney, PO Box 440215, Somerville, MA 02144):* *Popwatch* continues to reign as the most trustworthy and comprehensive of all indie-oriented music magazines. #8 includes a gorgeous cover (lots of deep reds and blues) and 132 pages packed with information. Features this time include James McNew, Railroad Jerk, King Loser, Sleepyhead, part 2 of Steve Burt's epic Undertones dissertation. The record review section is huge as ever. How do Leslie, Frank and their cohorts do it?

Pop! Year Zero #1 (L1? c/o Kuen-Wah Cheung, R22, Connaught Hall, Wessex Lane, Swaythling, Southampton SO18 2NS, UK): A decent first effort of a zine, complete with a day-glo cover and a free red balloon! Short interviews with Comet Gain, The Bigger The God and Bebe Rainbow, lots of live reviews, and a justifiably bitter attitude toward Britpop. (They love the Spice Girls, though, who were ubiquitous the whole time I was in London.) Especially liked the "Is Paul Weller The Antichrist?" piece.

Restaurant Fuel #2 and #3 *($3.00, PO Box 803, Greenbelt, MD 20768-0803, orpheus@wam.umd.edu):* Simply put, the warmest and friendliest new zine to come down the small-press pike in some time. *Restaurant Fuel* is published by Tina Henry and G. Jeff Barrus, a couple from the Washington, D.C. suburbs who contend that everyone has a story to tell. To that end, their magazine includes an appealing mix of music coverage and more personal and general writings. In issue #2, the music coverage included interviews with Class, Bill Barbot of Jawbox and DeSoto Records (who offered some interesting observations about working for Atlantic Records and simultaneously running their own indie label), local acid jazz DJ Eric Hilton, and a lot of well-written record reviews. There's a lot of fun non-music writing, too: a look inside Japanese convenience stores, pieces on Planet Of The Apes and French cinema, and excerpts from the 1895 book *The Business Girl* (chapters include "A Girl Must Maintain Her Self Respect" and "Do Your Work and Accept No Favors"). But it's the more personal writing that really lifts *RF* #2 above the pack. In "Growing Up Blue Collar," for instance, Jeff takes an honest, complex look at his working-class upbringing in Hagerstown, MD. He addresses not only the various ways in which he grew apart from his friends and family, but also the guilt that came with it and the condescending ways in which his college friends spoke of working-class towns. "It's so easy...to call blue-collar people 'white trash' and write them off as bottom-of-the-barrel citizens," Jeff writes. "How do you make them see that a town like Hagerstown isn't to be ridiculed, but understood? That blue-collar people aren't lazy, that they're working their asses off to be even slightly less than miserable?" Tina checks in with a piece on her sister Lisa and her frustrations. Most amazing of all is Jason Warrenfeltz's "An Apology" – Jason was a jock and a bully in high school, and this is his attempt to explain himself and offer a bit of remorse ("I know that experiences are what make you yourself... unfortunately, I wish I had not stepped on so many toes along the way"). All of these pieces take risks and get their points across with warmth, poignancy, humor and a rare lack of whining. Issue #2 even comes packaged with a hand-bound mini-zine called *Rack Focus*, which features a plethora of first memories as shared by friends, relatives and writers. Outstanding.

The music coverage in issue #8 includes Ian Svenonius (who comes off as articulate and thoughtful), Corm, and a report from the Popfest '97 show at NYC's Fez. The general features include an article about Tina's sister, an interview with an antique dealer, a bad experience being stuck in a Korean airport, a look at the diet pill d-fenfluramine and how it ties in with the American obsession with weight loss, high-school reminiscences by Tina's grandmother, and the return of the "Mail-Order Flea Market" that first showed up in issue #1. There's another issue of *Rack Focus* bound into the middle of #3, this one a tribute to actor Jean-Pierre Leaud.

Roctober #18 ($3 or $10 for 5 issues, c/o Jake Austen, 1507 E. 53rd St. #617, Chicago, IL 60615) Roctober comes through again. The latest issue features the "Chicago Rock 'n Soul Tour," a guide to Chi-town's overlooked, forgotten or out-of-the-way music spots. Along the way you'll pass Mandel Hall (scene of the first P-Funk show), Club Naked (where the music alternated hourly between 50 minutes of Chicago house and 10 minutes of hardcore punk), Jerry Butler's Songwriter's Workshop and "Punk'n Donuts" (donut shop/hardcore hangout). Elsewhere in this issue, Tiny Tim is remembered through one of his last-ever interviews, there's a list of "5 Rhythm & Blues Pimps" (including Wolfman Jack, which seems possible), and there's an interview with the Treniers (who date back to the 1940s), and the usual array of cartoons and brief but pithy/accurate reviews.

Space Cadet #1 ($1.00 c/o Sarah Gurney, Rhode Island School of Design, 2 College St. #1237, Providence, RI 02903): Sarah is a RISDI student, so it's no surprise her zine has a focus on art and design. The Softies interview focuses on Jen's artwork, the reviews pay special attention to cover design, and there are lots of cute drawings and scribbles in the margins. There's also a Love As Laughter interview, a short rundown of a year of Sarah's life, and blurry photos that could benefit from halftones.

Spunk #9 ($1.00 c/o Claire Schagerl, PO Box 27032, 1980 Ogilvie Road, Ottawa ON K1J 9L9, Canada): A great mix of comics and prose. Actually, the comics are my favorite part of the zine; kind of *Optic Nerve*-ish, but with their own personal slant. The prose includes articles on the Indie-Rock Flea Market (and how it tied in with the rest of Claire's summer), coffee mugs, and the impermanence of things. There is also an advice column and a crossword puzzle I didn't even bother to try and solve (I've always been crossword-impaired). To top it off, the cover is hand-colored and glittery. In addition to the artwork and the zine, Claire runs Caterpillar Distro, a small but growing selection of zines and records.

Tape Op #5 ($2.00 c/o Lawrence Crane, P.O. Box 15189, Portland, OR 97293; fboa@teleport.com): Lawrence Crane learned a think or two about creative, cost-effective recording in his many years as a member of Vomit Launch. Now based in Portland, OR, he runs the Jackpot! recording studio and publishes this zine, billed as "a magazine about creative music recording." It's probably among the first publications of any sort to adequately deal with the lower-budget end of music recording (I hesitate to say "lo-fi"): how to get the best sound from a four-track recorder, which cheap mics offer the best sound, the whole creative dilemma of "real" recording studios versus doing it yourself. Each issue of *Tape Op* offers a wealth of useful technical information, yet its low-key, anecdotal tone provides plenty of insight for us

Patio Communications

I'm looking for old pop and riot grrrl zines to include in Patio Communications archival zine distro. Because there is so much that is important and inspirational fanzine history, zines should not be kept as a secret privelege for those who were lucky enough to see them the first time around. If you're a veteran zinester who is interested in being a part of this documentation distro, please get in touch and we'll work something out. Thanks!
Sandi Ward/716 Stout St./
Bridgeport WV 26330-1114.
superscout@usa.net

technical illiterates. Rather than empirical rants about "doing it yourself," it offers specific examples and instructions. Lawrence did the first few issues pretty much by himself, but issue #5 includes plenty of contributors. Issue #5 includes a chat with mastering engineer Karl Bartlett, a trip to Athens with a couple of small-studio owners, a guide to cheap microphones ("If you're recording music and you don't have a Shure SM57, what's wrong with you?"), a practical guide to recording sampled hip-hop on 4-track, and recordings reviewed from a technical (but not alienating) perspective. Invaluable if you're either a budget-minded musician or fan...which probably includes almost all of you.

Thrill! #17 (a couple of stamps, PO Box 20639, Seattle, WA 98102): The latest issue of the this Tullycraft-generated newsletter includes lots of photos from their Autumn 1996 tour with Bunnygrunt and *lots* of vitriol about the Northerns, a band that opened for their Columbia, MO show and apparently abused them for the entire set. Seriously, Sean seems almost obsessed by them. There are also the usual short reviews of fanzines and records, and a smattering of Tullycraft news.

Train Times: Glasgow, Cathcart Circle, Nielston and Newton Lines (free, Strathclyde Passenger Transport; I got mine at Central Station): SPT is Glasgow's commuter railroad operated by ScotRail, which also runs trains throughout the country. As far as train schedules go, this is probably the nicest and classiest I've ever seen. It's a 20-page glossy booklet, extremely unlike the cheap fold-out NJ Transit and New York MTA schedules. Inside are timetables for the Glasgow, Cathcart Circle, Nielston and Newton lines. The times are given in military numbers (e.g. "Queens Park: 1517") rather than standard time, so it's a little difficult at first to follow but nothing you can't get over quickly. There's a little minivan icon next to each station that features Park & Ride facilities, a nice touch. The centerfold includes maps of the Glasgow underground system (nicknamed the "Clockwork Orange" for its circuitous route and the color of its trains and stations), the Route 398 bus link between the Queen Street and Central train stations (about 10 minutes by foot; my advice is just to walk), the bus to the Scottish Exhibition & Conference Centre – and in the very center, a colorful map of the entire SPT system. The station names are all excellent; my favorites include "Crossmyloof," "Lochwinnoch," "Pollokshields East" and "Easterhouse" (so that's where that band got their name). You can't possibly get lost riding the rails in the Glasgow metro area with one of these, and its maps and place names came in handy while I was editing this issue's Bis interview. All SPT lines terminate at Central Station, one of the most cleanest and most picturesque railroad stations I have ever seen. I kept "accidentally" missing trains so I could sit, eat Cadbury chocolates from the vending machine, and bask in its splendor. *(ScotRail, Caledonian Chambers, 87 Union St., Glasgow G1 3TA, UK; http://www.scotrail.co.uk)*

You Might As Well Live #4/Superette #12 ($2.00 and stamps from Lauren Martin, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY 12504 or Sandi Ward, 716 Stout St., Bridgeport, WV 26330-1114): A split issue bound with red, white and blue pipe cleaners! The *YMAWL* side includes Lauren's usual thoughtful observations, zine reviews and project listings. There are interviews with Claudia Gonson (about the 6ths) and Fuzzy, roundtable record reviews between her and Sandi, and a reader's poll. Though Lauren expresses misgivings with the whole music-review format, she's actually pretty good at it. The *Superette* side includes a terrific Vehicle Flips interview (in which Frank Boscoe proves himself an expert on his hometown of Pittsburgh), a casual chat with Allison from *Scruffy* zine and Denise *from I Can't Stop Smiling*, an Indie-Rock Flea Market photo gallery, a page from Emily Walker of *Busboy* zine, and an amazing article on "How Fanzines Saved My Life." In the latter, Sandi quite rightly suggests that zines exist to document the goings-on in our lives – a communal history, she says – so other people will know about them, too, and take something away. It's great that she recognizes the shared-history aspect of zine publishing and that her words aren't just being thrust into some empty vacuum. A great job all around.

Oh, in addition to her three million other projects, you should know that Lauren is helping to set up a zine library in the Bard College student center basement/coffee shop. They are looking for submissions, so if you have a zine, be sure and send her a copy.

Also readable:

Adventure Playground, Spring 1997 ($1.00 c/o Steve Burt, 6 Lynwood Place #9, New Haven, CT 06511; pangolin@monerva.cis.yale.edu): Another inspirational, jam-packed issue from Steve, with a detailed weekend (specifically January 18-20, 1997) tour diary by Sara Marcus that's interesting even if you weren't there like I was.

Astroboy 5000, Spring 1996 ($1.00, 195 Denistown St. #203, Welland, Ontario L3C 6P1, Canada): Adorable quarter-sized format; pieces on Venus Cures All, Sharon Mulholland of *Short Girl with Short Hair* zine, aliens and more.

Daydream Nation ($2.00 c/o Jeff King, 4632, St. Louis, MO 63128): A music/personal zine organized as a diary, with interviews (Godheadsilo, Bunnygrunt, Geraldine Fibbers) organized according to the day Jeff did them.

Mass Murder On Jelly Babies #1 (L1? c/o Paul, 1 Pitts Square, Hingham, Norwich NR9 4LD): Short interviews with Urusei Yatsura, Dweeb, Mellifluence and Bis. Visually dull dot-matrix typesetting.

Muffin Bones #16 (178 Farms Road, Stamford, CT 06903): Charming, homespun feel; I wish I'd discovered it years ago. The story about Ben Robertson still haunts me.

Kelp #7 ($2.00 c/o Mary Phillips-Sandy, 74 Silver St., Waterville, ME 04901): Mary travels around the US but is glad to return to her native Maine.

Letter Never Sent #2 ($1.00 c/o Karen Broyles or Chris Sivori, PO Box 7474, Austin, TX 78713-7474; letterneversent@juno.com): Cartoons, films, and stories about moving; a nice red cover.

Monozine #3 ($2.00, PO Box 598, Reisterstown, MD 21136): A zine about illness, not sparing the graphic descriptions.

Science Geek #3 ($3.00 c/o Steve Spatucci, PO Box 8641, Trenton, NJ 08650 USA): Doug Larkin mails in his dispatches from his Peace Corps assignment in Kenya. I am in awe.

Scram #6 ($4.00, PO Box 461626, Hollywood, CA 90046-1626): Another winning issue. Neil Hamburger seems even more depressed than usual here.

Skyway #2 ($1.00 c/o Doug Wallen, 10 Clemson Drive, Camp Hill, PA 17011): Above-average interviews with Sea Saw, Silver Jews, Flowchart and Hooker.

Superette #13 ($1.00 c/o Sandi Ward, 716 Stout St., Bridgeport, WV 26330): Lots of zine/record reviews, contemplation about friendship, crushes and "cuteness," all bound up in cut-and-paste glory.

Take Me To Your Leader (L1? C/o Natasha, 122 Shell Road, Lewisham, London SE13 7DF): Natasha of *My Little Fanzine* and like-minded friends. Always a blast – and no other zine captures that giddy after-show feeling so well.

Ted Gottfried's Modern Monuments ($3, 59 E. 7th St., New York, NY 10003): See Hea's proprietor visits cemeteries and takes pictures of the more interesting headstones.

Trash Heap ($250 c/o Andrew Kuo, PO Box 552, Scarsdale, NY 10583): Seam, June of 44, Palace, and journal entries that perfectly capture Andrew's transition from sheltered high-school life to slightly less sheltered college life.

Who Needs A Beat When The Beat Just Goes #2 ($1.00, Box 2905, 1 College St., Worcester, MA 01610): Personal writings with a recurring focus on romantic awkwardness.

Wind-Up Toy, summer 1996 ("The All-Ohio Issue") ($550 c/o Liz Clayton, PO Box 7122, Ann Arbor, MI 48107 USA). Various musicians and musical types talk about Ohio. Especially notable for the Bob Lewis (ex-early days of Devo) interview.

Zero is Beautiful ($1.00?, PO Box 2506, Portland, OR 97208): Three kids learning how to build lives for themselves away from their parents' houses. Like *Cometbus* if Aaron was 18 again.

Recordings

ADVENTURES IN STEREO

Adventures In Stereo (blue cover)
Creeping Bent CD

Probably my favorite record of 1997 so far. Jim Beattie (a member of the early Primal Scream, and the main force behind Spirea X) and his fiancee Judith sculpt their short songs out of four- and eight-bar samples of what sound like thrift-store'60s records, topping them with lovely Stereolab/Beach Boys vocal harmonies. It's as if the Magnetic Fields made a sequel to *The House of Tomorrow* using source material from Serge Gainsbourg, Brigitte Bardot, Saint Etienne and old American TV soundtracks. I especially like the tiny bits of silence before the samples regenerate, lending a nice off-kilter cut-and-paste feel to the proceedings. *Adventures In Stereo* contains 18 gems, collecting their three 7" releases and six previously-unreleased songs. All of them are completely addictive; this is one of the few CDs on which I could (and do) hit continuous-play and listen for hours. I couldn't pick a favorite if you asked me: immediate highlights include the Lemon Kittens shuffle of "The Attic Walk," the electro-surf doo-wop of "My Buddy Go" and "Underground Sound," the reverb-doused piano ballad "Remain Again," the mutant Watusi beats that drive "When We Go Back" and "Flipside." Completely stunning, sugar-coated, slightly strange nuggets of greatness. They'll be playing America with a full band later this year. I simply cannot wait. *(P.O. Box 3645, Glasgow G42 9AU, Scotland)*

ADVENTURES IN STEREO

Adventures In Stereo (yellow cover)
Underground Sounds CD

Not the new Adventures in Stereo album, alas, but a collection of old demo tapes rumored to have been released by a conniving ex-manager. Consequently, this isn't a cohesive set of songs as much as a collection of snippets, ideas and inferior alternate versions recorded a few years ago. It's definitely not up to the blue album's high standards, although there are some interesting tracks here, many of which are closer to the hip-hop/electronica realm than the more '60sish material they've been working on lately. So is a work in progress worth $21 at your local import record shop? If you're as avid an AiS fan as me, sure, definitely. But if not, I'd say stick with the singles collection. The band is fighting this CD's release through the MCPS, so it may be out of print by the time you read this and the whole review might be moot. Maybe I'll just calculate whatever royalties the band might have gotten and send it *(no address listed, but their rather threadbare website is http://www.lorsim.co.uk/usounds.html)*

ARAB STRAP

The Week Never Starts Round Here
Chemikal Underground LP

It's a cinematic record.

Like some warped soundtrack to a post-*Trainspotting* docudrama on Glaswegian Youth Kulture, it's a voyeuristic record, a record of lives that may well be as full of love and squalor as they are full of substance abuse and peculiar relationships. It's a record of the fucked up and the fucked over.

It's a ravishing record.

Musically it's a showcase for minimalist, pared down neo-folk. Post-folk if you must, and there are those who must, I am sure. Everything is kept crisp and downbeat, a lazy shuffle of guitars and stroked drums which occasionally give way to drum machines limited to basic tinny beats. The downbeats work best on tracks like the excellent "The Clearing" and "Blood," but perhaps the most immediate moment comes with the insertion of those machine beats into "The First Big Weekend," in classic timing as the story reaches the point of going to 'The Arches' for a Friday night out. This is a tune that is as perfect a reflection of the spirit of summer loves for it's times as the Undertones' "Here Comes The Summer" or the Lovin' Spoonful's "Summer In The City" were for theirs. It's easy to imagine some Warholian figure of today writing in years to come that in their studio, Arab Strap were playing all summer long whilst the streets outside got dustier and emptier. And always the undisguised Glasgow accents are a central element, reinforcing the narrative quality which is central to the concept of folk music.

It's a funny record.

You laugh in the knowledge that this is not your life. Or at least, if it reflects moments that are recognizable from your life then it does so by exaggerating those moments and transferring the feelings onto a canvas that is more grim in it's content. So it's an uneasy humor at times. At others though it's the humor of children, notably in the peculiar low level recordings of what sound like spontaneous improvisations; poem songs recorded on cheap tape recorders, full of that grimy underside of life in the '90s, and funny as fuck. This is kids' stuff; the kids' stuff when you played with tape recorders and made up a load of shit just because you could. Diary entries rhymed on tape.

Most hilarious is the final line of the final epic, "Deeper;" a cautionary tale of attempted teen seduction by a friend's elder sister. It's moody as hell; a pure VU workout fronted by a mournful sounding kid who resents the attempt to steal away his innocence. In the end he just says no, desperate to retain that endless summer naiveté. Which is as fine a way of describing the entire Arab Strap experience as any.

It's a record you should own. *(PO Box 3609, Glasgow G42 9TP, Scotland)* ***—Alastair Fitchett***

AVOCADO BABY

Foolish and Punk
Beekeeper 45

The first thing I noticed about this record was the fact that, well, it was nearly impossible to actually listen to it. I'm all for bedroom recording and low-cost production, but it defeats the purpose when I'm forced to get up no fewer than 10 times to fix a skipping needle because of cheap pressing. I wasn't able to listen to a single song (and they're short songs, scarcely more than a minute) all the way through. That said, I really do like this record, which is wonderfully minimalist, with boy/girl vocals and inventive instrumentation—guitar, melodica, xylophone, maracas, toy piano. Peter and Rachel's songs are short and spare, nicely arranged. "What I Notice" has jazzy guitar and drums that run like a heartbeat underneath; "Astro Naught," a capella, is like a jumprope chant. And "Cakecutter Means 24 Hours" is best of all, with a low, contemplative guitar line, single notes that remind me of the Receptionists and stretch to chords in the chorus. *(Slampt, P.O. Box 54, Heaton, NE6 5YW, England)* - ***Tami Heaton***

ALEC BATHGATE

"Pet Hates" *(Flying Nun 7")*
Gold Lame (Flying Nun CD)

Up until now it was easy to write off Alec Bathgate, the quieter half of the Tall Dwarfs, as Chris Knox' second fiddle. Knox was the attention-grabber, after all – he was the one making frequent solo albums, singing virtually all the songs at the Tall Dwarfs' American

live shows, and cracking jokes and molesting audience members at his solo shows. Then Bathgate dropped the "Pet Hates" single last year, and some revision was immediately in order. One of the most accomplished singles of 1996, "Pet Hates" was constructed from roughly the same ingredients as any good Tall Dwarfs or Chris Knox song – makeshift percussion, jangly guitar strummed furiously, keyboards, and a ridiculously catchy melody. To put it simply, the song shone, and Bathgate seemed gleeful at this chance for solo recognition. *Gold Lame* is full of similarly quality material. Written and played entirely by Alec, it sounds like a Tall Dwarfs album, right down to the Syd Barrett/Robyn Hitchcock melodies and the nasal vocals. *Gold Lame* may be a little more straightforward, though, which doesn't mean it lacks a sense of humor – "No Taxi To Hoboken" is my favorite song title in ages (has no one told Alec about the PATH train?), "Train To Skaville" employs non-skankable backwards percussion, and "Gold Lame" wryly ruminates (at distance) about becoming a star. Could it be that Alec and Chris are just so on the same wavelength that their approaches to songwriting and recording have practically melded together? In any event, it was a nice surprise to find out that he's had an ace up his sleeve this whole time. (P.S.: The new Tall Dwarfs CD, *Stumpy*, is well worth hearing, too; Alec and Chris did indeed use samples sent in by fans, and it's lots of fun to hear what people sent in and how they influenced the material.) *(PO Box 3470, Chapel Hill, NC 275153470)*

BEANPOLE

"Toss and Turn" b/w "Our Life" *(Goodbye Virginia 7")*
Beanpole (Blackbean and Placenta Tape Club 12")

One of my favorite practitioners of what Steve Burt calls the "bedroom-pop" genre. Beanpole is Verna Brock, a former member of Rocketship and an occasional cellist in Holiday Flyer. On record, she specializes in melodic, low-volume songs recorded on four or less tracks. Most of Verna's songs are constructed with strummy guitar, shy vocals (often with overdubbed harmonies), and the occasional cello; the best ones sound like they were recorded late at night after a breakup. (In fact, most of the lyrics are specifically set indoors.) Low-budget, yes, but definitely not "lo-fi"; Beanpole songs are always clearly recorded and well-arranged. Verna's best songs are small, embraceable treasures, so it's my pleasure to have two new records to enjoy. The Goodbye Virginia 7" comes in a light green sleeve with a drawing of a little girl looking out a window onto a rainy day. "Toss & Turn" is led by a Cannanes-style rhythm and a nice flute countermelody; "Our Life" is slower and shimmery. The 12" comes wrapped in a large sheet of light-blue construction paper with the track listings pasted on in white. All five songs are fairly melancholy and are vaguely related to themes of leaving or being left alone. Most are fairly upbeat musically, with the cover of Neil Diamond's "A Little Bit Me, A Little Bit You" a standout – love the tambourine and organ solo). I adore Beanpole and can't recommend her/them strongly enough. *(6001 Hickorywood Way, Citrus Heights, CA 95621)*

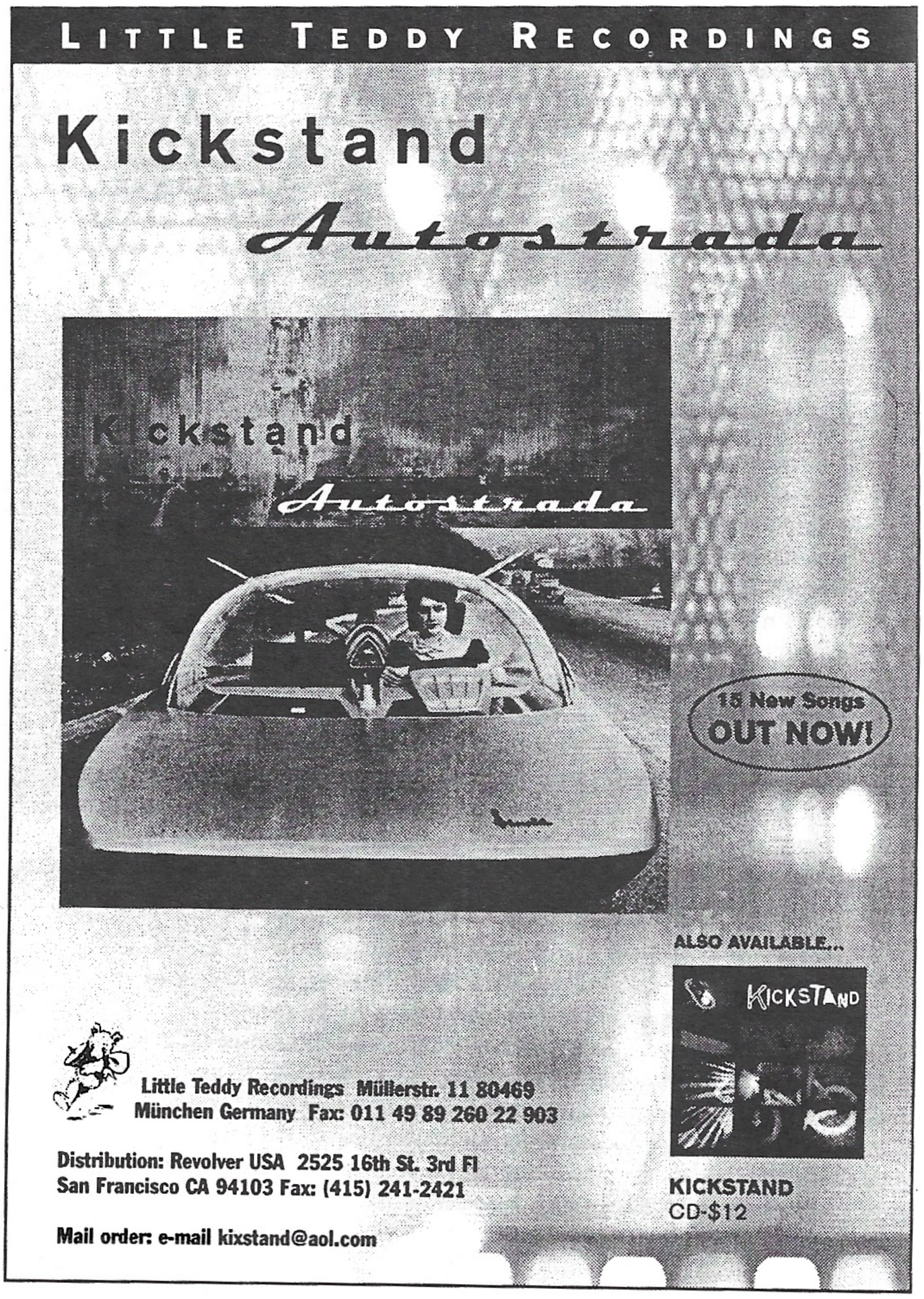
BROADCAST

"Living Room" / "Phantom"
Duophonic Super 45s 7"

Broadcast takes direct musical cues from both Stereolab, Pram and even very early Lush, yet the end result sounds completely their own. "Living Room" is an addictive psychedeliepop song augmented by a backdrop of humming and chirping keyboards; it sounds like a United States of America outtake updated for the late1990s. The instrumental "Phantom" is a moody spaceage bachelor pad music instrumental with fractured gong effects. This is one of those rare singles that I haven't been able to pry off my turntable; get it while you still can. *(PO Box 3787, London, UK SE22 9DZ)*

BUNNYGRUNT: *"Blue Christmas" + 2 (Septophilia 7")*
THE APRICOTS: *"Everyday" + 2 (Septophilia 7")*

With their latest single, Bunnygrunt enters the realm of the holiday record. Side A's "Seasons Freaklings" is a typical Bunnygrunt raveup, complete with a breakneck tempo, gleeful traded vocals between Karen and Matt, and a nice sleigh-bell break. "The Hanukkah Scoot" is an instrumental – a catchy one, granted, but I was really hoping for something to replace that stupid dreidel song as a token Festival of Lights anthem. The cover of "Blue Christmas" is marred by Karen's hoarse, off-key vocals: "Karen had a cold," apologize the liner notes, but maybe she should have waited a few days before recording and drank tea. On the other hand, everyone I know got sick between Christmas and New Year's Even this year, so you could argue she's actually succeeded in evoking the 1996-1997 holiday season. I still



prefer Miracle Legion's version of this song, though. The sleeve is drawn by Jen Sbragia and colored a cool wintry blue. Buy now and save until November 1997.

The Apricots is a Bunnygrunt side project of sorts: Karen plays guitar, and her fiancee Tom plays bass. "Everyday" is a dulcet Buddy Holly cover, and "Anxious Surfer" and "Wonder Boy" are both in the poppy, slightly sloppy vein of Bunnygrunt's last couple of singles (without Matt's fuzz-guitar solos, that is). *(PO Box 3461, Maplewood, MO 63143)*

THE CANNANES/SLEEPY TOWNSHIP

Chapter Music 7"

The three Cannanes songs are the first I've heard since David Nichols left. "Price You Pay" finds them heading in a darker but not uncharacteristic direction: an ominous four-note keyboard drone and a quiet female voice. "Tennyson" is closer to their usual strummy texture, while "Platypus" is dominated by a sped-up rhythm box and reminds me ever so vaguely of the Tall Dwarfs. The Cannanes can do almost no wrong, and this seems like the beginning of yet fruitful another new era for them. Sleepy Township alternately recalls Tullycraft ("Kinda") and the Wedding Present ("Sleepy Township Song"), except with understated vocals. "The Point" is a nicely ramshackle singalong. *(PO Box 4292, Melbourne University, Parkville 3052)*

THE CAT'S MIAOW

A Kiss and A Cuddle (Bus Stop CD)
I Cant Help But Love You (Quiddity 7")

The Bus Stop CD includes two dozen songs (plus at least eight or nine bonus tracks) by this low-key Australian four-piece, all taken from several cassettes they released between 1992 and 1993, most of them lovely, quite a few of them only a minute or less in length. The Cat's Miaow have always reminded me somewhat of the Cannanes, mostly for Kerrie's voice (which bears a remarkable resemblance to Frances Gibson's), but their songs tend to be quieter and less lyrically sarcastic. Most of the songs are driven by bass and soft drums played with brushes; a few depend on acoustic and droney electric guitar. There's a lot here to absorb, but a remarkably high quota of these songs hit home, probably because they only last as long as they have to. *A Kiss and A Cuddle* is a special treat for those of us who didn't buy the cassettes from Toytown but later fell for their American 7" releases. Speaking of which, Quiddity has released *I Cant Help But Love You,* four songs recorded on afternoon last August. There's a Chris Bell cover ("Don't Worry, This Isn't About You"), a Saint Etienne cover ("Nothing Can Stop Us"), and original songs with words by F. Scott Fitzgerald and someone named Caitlin. Dulcet as always. *(Bus Stop, PO Box 3161, Iowa City, IA 52244; Quiddity, 122 44th St. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49548)*

THE CAT'S MIAOW

J'en ai marre
Drive-In 45

An absolute must-have for Cat's Miaow fans—and everyone else, for that matter. The songs are quiet, lazy, languid, with graceful trumpets and soft, melodic vocals. And the fact that they're all in French only adds to the quiet beauty and sophistication. Best on the single is "Troisieme Etage," a lovely rendition of "Third Floor Fire Escape View" but softer, with stringlike keyboards and a soaring trumpet line. *(P.O. Box 888211, Grand Rapids, MI 49588)* **-Tami Heaton**

DOUBLE AGENT 1980

various artists
Double Agent CD

A bunch of indierock bands doing new wave covers; it could have been a disaster, but in Double Agent's hands it actually works. This is because most of the contributors have deliberately avoided kitsch value, zeroing in on the songs themselves and unlocking treasures you might have never heard in the originals. Thus My Favorite slows David Bowie's "Modern Love" down to dirge tempo a la Vienna-era *Ultravox*, and Class transforms Jermaine Stewart's dance hit "We Don't Have To Take Our Clothes Off" into a homerecorded plea for tenderness. Holiday performs "Vacation" with subtle surf guitar and well-placed keyboards. The Softies turn in a perfectly-chosen version of Rik Astley's "Together Forever" – the lovesick lyrics fit them to a T. Tullycraft and Incredible Force of Junior "collaborate" on (read: get together one night, get drunk and play a sloppy version of) "Hold Me Now." But my favorite of the whole collection is probably Bunnygrunt's version of "Holiday Road;" I love the spirited, off-key harmonies, and the breezy feel somehow seem appropriate (they should have sampled the barking dogs at the end, though). I could argue with Michael Grace's pretentious '80s essay that appears on the inner sleeve and how it completely misinterprets New Wave's intentions ("New Wave valued SPIRIT over SIMULATION?" So A Flock Of Seagulls and Kajagoogoo weren't "simulation?"), but for once I won't spoil the party. *(#3204, 188 E. 64th St., New York, NY 10021; http://www.doubleagent.com)*

DQE AND JAD FAIR: *DQE And Jad Fair (Dark Beloved Cloud CD)* GRACE BRAUN: *It Wont Hurt (Slow River CD)*

With these two releases, DQE's transformation to a country/roots band is complete. The Dark Beloved Cloud CD is a loose, spontaneous collection of mostly-acoustic songs, not too removed from the bluegrassy *Jump On In.* Both Jad and Grace Braun write songs and sing; they split up lead vocals about evenly, but my favorites are the duets. I am particularly partial to the rocking female biker drama "Alice Friday," the lonesome "Dog Song" (with some truly unearthly wails in the chorus) and "Blue Blue," a hoedown with improvised verses – it's priceless to hear Jad struggle for two lines that rhyme with "Let's go out and paint the town." The CD is a true collaboration, unlike some Jad records where his charismatic presence overwhelms everyone else. Good job all around. *It Wont Hurt* is billed as a Grace solo record, but Dugan and the rest of the DQE crew joins in. The production is the lushest ever on a Gracerelated record, incorporating pedal steel, dobro, xylophone and violin. Grace revisits some of her earlier material ("Good Thing" from *N Is For Knowledge* is here renamed "Do Right") amongst a parcel of originals, showcasing some of her strongest songwriting and singing to date. Released on what is now a subsidiary of Rykodisc, *It Wont Hurt* will probably reach Grace's widest audience to date, which is appropriate for her most mature work to date. *(DBC, 5-16 47th Road #3L, Long Island City, NY 11101; Slow River, Shetland Park, 27 Congress St., Salem, MA 01970)*

EDITH FROST

Calling Over Time
Drag City CD

Edith Frost's music marks the perfect meeting ground between Maybelle Carter and Will Oldham. It's got prominent rootsy influences, but it's also filtered through a '90s indie perspective. Which is not to say that there's conscious juxtaposition going on, because Edith's music seems very straightforward. It's just the product of someone who draws from many different sources and experiences, someone who's lived in rural Texas, Brooklyn and Chicago. She released an excellent debut double 7" last year, and on *Calling Over Time* she's joined by members of Eleventh Dream Day, Gastr del Sol

and the High Llamas, all of whom play in a thankfully low-key, sparse style that complement the melodies and vocals perfectly. A few tracks ("Albany Blues," "Give Up Your Love," "Pony Song") are fairly straightforward coffeehouse country/folk. My favorites, however, are covered in this hazy, celestial glaze of thin keyboards, slow tempos and ethereal singing. The title track and "Denied" are like desert mirages, so prominent yet elusive. Lyrics are generally of the lonesome, contemplative variety, with some truly inspired passages on the order of "I don't wanna be too happy/Just enough to tide me over." A beautiful record, one that makes me wish I'd seen Edith play more often while she lived in New York City. *(PO Box 476867, Chicago, IL 60647; http://enteract.com/~cowsnacks)*

FUTURE BIBLE HEROES

Memories of Love
Slow River CD

Chris Ewen wrote the melodies; Stephin Merritt wrote lyrics and did arrangements, and Stephin and Claudia Gonson trade off vocals. Hence, *Memories of Love* contains Magnetic Fields overtones with an '80s moody electropop bent, not at all unlike a modern-day version of Tears For Fears' *The Hurting* or New Musik's *Sanctuary*. I particularly like the bossa-nova drum-machine beat of "SheDevils of the Deep," the new version of "Hopeless" (with Claudia singing instead of Stephin), and the each scene of "Real Summer," featuring this lyric "...and the Beach Boys might as well play 'Winter Wonderland.'" There are a few bands (The Pulsars, The Autumn Teen Sound) playing around with this kind of sound these days, but the Future Bible Heroes have created possibly the most interesting document. What else would you expect from the personnel involved? I can't finish this review without complimenting the cover and liner notes, a series of sadistically challenging word games. *(Shetland Park, 27 Congress St., Salem, MA 01970)*

GOLLIPOPPS

"Moana"
Teenbeat 45

Everyone was saying this, the Gollipopps' debut single, sounded like Blast Off Country Style in their early (still good, i.e. pre-*Rainbow Mayonnaise Deluxe*) days. So of course I ran out and bought it immediately. And when I got it home and onto the turntable, oh what disappointment. As far as I can tell, the only thing this record shares with BOCS is their former bass player, Phil Sweeney. I listened again a few days later, hoping that if I didn't expect it to sound like BOCS I might like it a bit more. I was partially right: The A-side songs aren't bad — fast, poppy, a little garagey in production — but the chorus to "Moana" really turns me off: "Gollipopp, yum-yum-yummy, Gollipopp." Ugh. And "Recount," on the B-side, strikes me somehow as a disheartened homage to the Dead Kennedys. For now, I think I'll keep listening to "C'mon and Blast Off..." *(P.O. Box 3265, Arlington, VA 22203) -Tami Heaton*

HELEN LOVE

Radio Hits 2
Damaged Goods CD

More of the same from the Helen Love camp. If you're into Helen Love, you won't be disappointed. Particularly catchy: "Diet Coke Girl," a ditty about corporate culture and a "low-fat, high-fiber girl" who keeps it alive ("She's not the real thing"); "Beat Him Up," a shout against domestic violence with a relatively quiet, contemplative break ("Can't believe you look so sweet, can't believe you're hurting me"); and the album's second version of "We Love You," which makes me want to dust off my Sigue Sigue Sputnik records and Shoot It Up. Oh, and let's not forget that ode to everyone's favorite entertainment attorney, "Matthew Kaplan Superstar." You know, I hear he's finer than Rodney Bingenheimer. But not by much. *(P.O. Box 671, London E17 6NF, England) -Tami Heaton*

HONEYBUNCH: *Time Trials 1987-1995 (Summershine CD)*
SMALL FACTORY: *The Industrial Evolution (Pop Narcotic CD)*
THE GODRAYS: *Songs For TV Stars (Vernon Yard CD)*

(Warning: if you want to know what I think of the actual records, as opposed to my rambling memoirs, skip to the next page.)

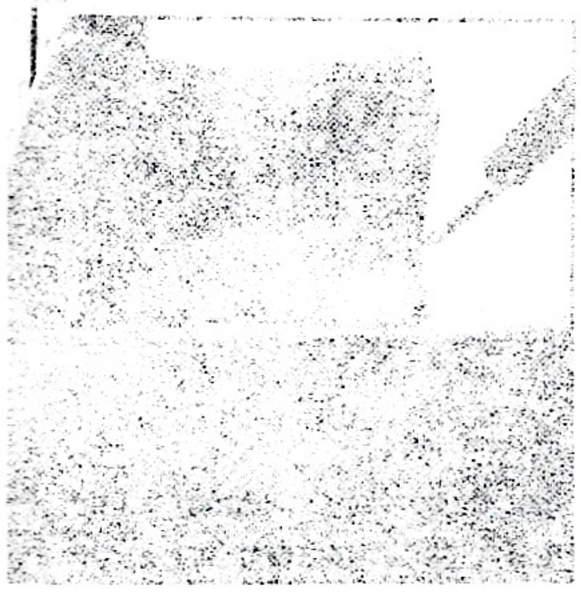
I left Plainsboro that cold Friday morning in March 1992 and drove my blue Mercury Lynx up I-95. Since I didn't have a job, hadn't had one in months, I had plenty of time to get to the Providence Indie Rock Explosion, a threeday music festival I'd been looking forward to for months. Surprisingly, I made it all the way there without mishap. My reliable car had been showing its age lately, and I'd found myself stranded along a few highways over the past year.

To put it bluntly, things went to hell in my life that year. I was unemployed and living in my mom's apartment in central New Jersey. Most of what I owned was in a self-storage space out on Highway 33 in East Windsor, and most of my records and clothes were piled up in a couple of closets in the apartment. My dad died, and my girlfriend-of-the-time moved to El Paso; she and I were in the midst of a doomed long-distance relationship. I am not exaggerating when I tell you that music, and the attendant social scene that went along with it, meant more to me during those months than they had since I was 13. Going to shows and listening to WPRB kept me connected to the rest of the world, or so I felt at the time.

Luckily, I picked a prime era of East Coast musical history for all this to happen. Between 1991 and 1993, there seemed to be an endless supply of inspired bands between Rhode Island and North Carolina who specialized in melodic, often British-tinged pop music. Versus, Tsunami, Unrest, Courtney Love, Superchunk's early singles, the Magnetic Fields' *Distant Plastic Trees*, Simple Machines' initial series of 7" compilations, Sleepyhead, Nation of Ulysses' *13-Point Program To Destroy America*, Kicking Giant, Flying Saucer, Eggs, the Lilys' first single...in retrospect, it was such a fertile, diverse period of music. Not many people knew about these bands, so buying the singles and going to shows felt like being let in on an especially friendly private party.

Two of my favorites, Honeybunch and Small Factory, were both from Providence, a city whose music scene was remarkably lively. Honeybunch were, at the time, one of the very few bands in America influenced by Postcard Records' early roster. Jeffrey Borchardt sang in a high, thin voice strongly reminiscent of Roddy Frame; his songs combined the stark structures of the Go-Betweens' *Send Me A Lullabye* with the accomplished melodies of *Before Hollywood* or Orange Juice's *You Can't Hide Your Love Forever*. Small Factory consisted of a long-term Providence scenester who'd often played my old hometown of New Brunswick with his old band, What Now, and a couple of RISDI grads on bass and drums. Their first single contained three of the happiest, most optimistic, most wideeyed – yet most cautious – songs I'd ever heard, echoing my own thoughts to a literally frightening extent. "Suggestions," "Happy To See" and "Not Afraid" all had an element of self-doubt even in their most hopeful moments – "Keep your chin up and I'll watch the highway as we drive off to someplace cheap and amazing" was the most eloquent – yet the soaring melodies and dizzily-strummed guitars suggested triumph, resolution, a happy ending.

Anyway, the Providence IndieRock Explosion was a chance to meet or get reacquainted with certain people, most of whom I've stayed in touch with to this day. The location, a cheap downtown hotel called the Church House Inn, was perfect. The bands played downstairs, and most of the attendees stayed upstairs. It was possible to get out of



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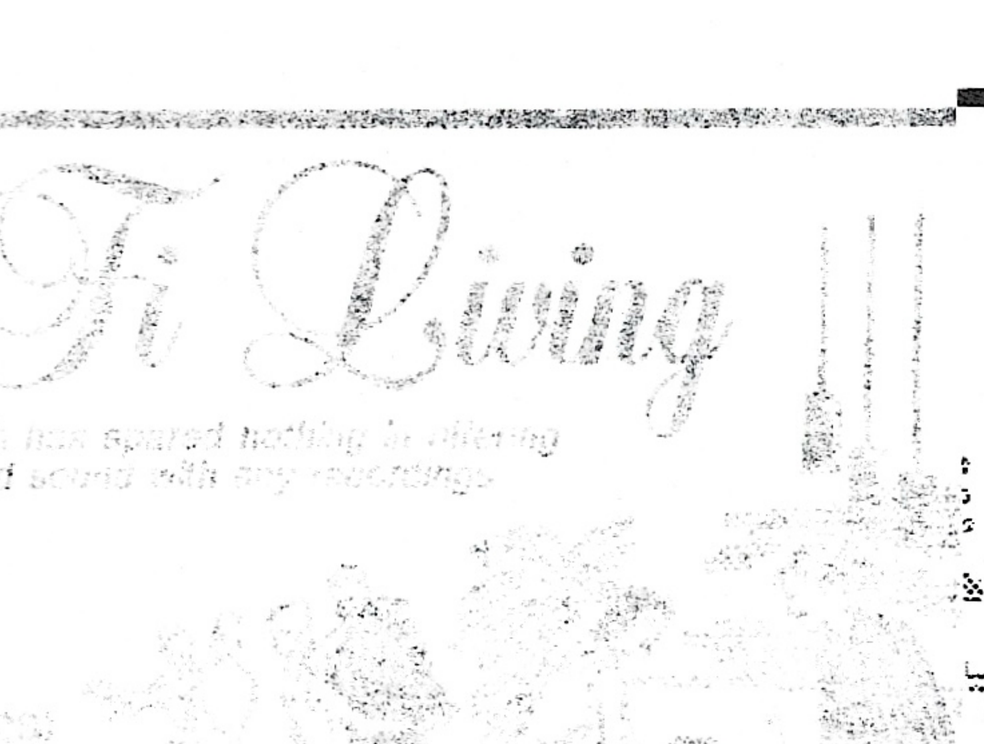

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bed (or, in my case, off of the floor), take a shower, walk a few flights downstairs and wake up to Versus and the Magnetic Fields. Most of my favorite East Coast bands played that weekend, and most were at their height – well, except for the Magnetic Fields, who were sloppy and battling a poor sound mix, but it was the first chance most of us had to see them. But the hometown bands put in the best sets. Honeybunch appeared in red dinner jackets and played an elegant, completely engaging performance. Small Factory were always a lively band to see, but this set was outstanding, a delicious energy exchange between an enthusiastic crowd and a band thrilled to be there and playing about as well as they ever would. During "Suggestions," the entire crowd of 300 or so sang along; it was a moving moment, one I wouldn't soon forget.

Five years later, both Honeybunch and Small Factory have compilation CDs out, giving me a chance to revisit music that meant a lot to me at a certain point in my life. In Honeybunch's case, I'm thrilled that someone has finally compiled not only their singles and compilation tracks, but added several previously-unreleased songs. There are still missing tracks not included here – "Crooked Mile" from the *Fuck Yeah!* flexidisc, "Nothing But Trouble" from Ty Jesso's *Milky Way* zine/flexi, and about a dozen incredible demos and radio tracks circa 1990 – but *Time Trials* includes all the essentials and then some. All of the singles hold up well, and the chronological order demonstrates how Jeffrey's songwriting slowly broadened to let in elements of cocktail jazz ("No More I Told You So's," "Sticks and Stones"), Bats/Verlaines-styled jangle ("Mine Your Own Business") and even light blues ("Remember You Always," "Tapeworm"'s slide guitar lick). Honeybunch have always worked slowly, but their method has always yielded impressive results, and *Time Trials*, recorded a few tracks at a time, is almost without fail. I can't recommend it enough. (And their new songs are of similarly high quality, too, judging from the show I just saw at Fez. Bubblegum-flavored, almost!)

My reaction to *The Industrial Evolution* is decidedly more complicated. On the plus side, the packaging is nice, replacing the typical CD booklet with small reproductions of the original 7" covers. And songs like "Yeah!," "Hopefully," "What To Want" and most of all "Suggestions" still burst with rousing energy. Any newcomer to the Small Factory catalog, or anyone missing some of the singles, is sure to be thrilled. Even the more introspective tracks, like "Scared Of Love" and "If You Break My Heart," are underpinned by guitar and rhythmic rushes that suggest that everything will be fine in the end ("What To Want" insists "but I'll be OK, but I'll be OK, I'll BE ALL RIGHT!"). But hearing them literally causes physical pangs if I'm in a particularly fragile mood. The songs are just so rooted in that specific era of my life, a time when I needed some confidence, that I can't place them in a 1997 context without remembering the bittersweet, conflicting emotions I felt at the time.

I also can't help but think of what eventually happened to Small Factory, the way they ran out of steam. Toward the end, their live shows became sluggish – gone were the playful banter and Phoebe's impatience to play each song as quickly as possible, replaced by the depressing feeling that they weren't enjoying each other or the music at all. By their last album, *For If You Cannot Fly*, many songs had turned downright somber, finding the protagonists laying around the house all day and trying to seek solace in Versus demo tapes. It was just depressing to hear these spent odes...although not nearly as depressing as hearing the Godrays, which finds Alex and Phoebe continuing in the straight-ahead vein of Alex's songs from *For If You Cannot Fly*, only to even less impressive effect. The results on *Songs For TV Stars* are almost uniformly unimpressive, sounding like thousands of other mediocre indierock songs. Phoebe and Alex (or at least the record they've made) remind me of the people I knew in college who grew old and jaded too fast. Dave Auchenbach's new band, Flora Street, does a far better job of updating and improving on the Small Factory sound; the two live shows I've seen over the last year were wonderful, and I expect their records (whenever they come out) to live up to this promise. *(Pop Narcotic: 1085 Commonwealth Ave. #339, Boston, MA 02215; Summershine, PO Box 23392, Seattle, WA 98102, summershine@subpop.com)*

INTERNATIONAL STRIKE FORCE

Love Is... (Slampt LP)
Soeur...? (Slampt 7")

I used to think that their original name, "Golden Starlet," was far better and more concise than "International Strike Force." Now I think the name change was for the best – this UK fivepiece sounds far more like a ragtag army than a group of glittering pageant winners (perhaps they're leaving this "golden starlet" business to Kenickie). You can hear ISF's probable influences straight away all over their LP – off the top of my head I'd guess they've heard and appreciated Kleenex, the Slits, the Fall, Huggy Bear, Heavens to Betsy, the Undertones, Lung Leg and Crass – but they don't seem constricted by this at all, nor is *Love Is...* an attempt at emulation. It's an invigorating, semi-shambling racket, with lots of unforgettable hooks and shouted chants rising above the din. My favorites are "Golden Starlet" ("golden starlet!/ cheap tartlet!/yeah yeah!" and "You'll Be Dumped (And Then You'll Be Sorry)." Apparently there are "tribute(s) to Take That and Middlesborough FC," hidden somewhere herein, or so it says in the Slampt catalog, but I am American and as such can't place the references. *Soeur...?* comes wrapped in a nice red and gold sleeve and is very much a continuation of the LP's themes. It features at least two readymade anthems, "Invasion of the Boyscout Clubhouse" and "Let's Go Inter Strike Force! (Let's Go!)" They must be awesome to see live. *(PO Box 54, Heaton, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE6 5YW, England)*

KITTY CRAFT

"It's Stupid" + 3
Soda Girl 7"

Kitty Craft is Pamela, who lives in Minneapolis, and her four-track. She writes and records minimal, pop songs with guitar, drums, keyboard and what sounds like a toy xylophone. Her music reminds me slightly of the Receptionists or Beanpole. Pamela sings quietly, almost to herself, as if she's afraid to wake up her neighbors. This is, of course, a compliment. I especially like "High As A Kite," with its stop-start drumming and the xylophone. A very high quality record. *(PO Box 10771, Eugene, OR 97440)*

LE MANS

"Ama Hil Zagu" / "Un Rayo de Sol"
Grimsey 7"

This is the first stateside release by the Madrid group Le Mans, and a good one it is. "Ama Hil Zaigu" is a minor-key flamenco-ish number, while "Un Rayo de Sol" is guided by a loping, almost tropical dance beat (and a trombone solo) that puts me in mind of *Rip It Up*-era Orange Juice. As usual, Le Mans does all this in a refreshingly kitsch-free fashion, putting songwriting before posing. Grimsey is set to re release some of Le Mans' Spanish albums in the U.S., so soon everyone (well, several hundred people at least) will know of what high quality they are. *(PO Box 541, Stillwater, MN 55082)*

THE LOUD FAMILY

Interbabe Concern
Alias CD

Well, Scott Miller predicted "a more freak-out record," and here it is.

Gone are the misjudgments that plagued their disappointing last album, *The Tape of Only Linda* – particularly the Eddie Van Halen guitar solos and hard-rock production – and instead we get a complicated, multi-faceted song cycle more in line with *Plants & Birds & Rocks & Things* and Game Theory's *Lolita Nation*. *Interbabe Concern* contains 19 songs, which range from 50-second snippets to extended pieces. It's a lot to absorb in one listen. In fact, the album seemed almost impenetrable to me at first, containing very few immediate pleasures; several listens later, the weight of it hit me all at once, and I found the singalong coda of the leadoff track – "My girlfriend's got sodium laureth sulf/sodium laureth sulfate/hairrrr" – repeating itself endlessly in my brain. Songs like "I'm Not Really A Spring" (featuring Game Theory's Gil Ray and Shelly LaFreniere!), "Such Little Nonbelievers," and "Sodium Laureth Sulfate" are among Scott's best in years, finding an uneasy but suitable balance between his modern-day bittersweetness and the kind of rushing buildups for which Game Theory were best known. The lyrics are some of his best, too: "Where The Flood Waters Soak Their Belongings" is about London, separating the real city from the one you learned about from punk rock records, and "Such Little Nonbelievers" contains this witty bon mot: "They say we're cute when we're mad, and we are!/So cute there's not an animation product in Japan we don't outsparkle by far." The deeper you dig into *Interbabe Concern*, the more rewards it offers. It won't replace *Plants & Birds...* as my favorite Loud Family album, but it does represent a high point in the Scott Miller canon. How has he managed to keep up this standard of quality through so many changing lineups and trials? *(2815 W. Olive Ave., Burbank, CA 91505)*

THE MOUNTAIN GOATS:
Full Force Galesburg (Emperor Jones CD)
Tropical Depression (split single with Furniture Huschle) *(Little Mafia 7")*

John Darnielle has more than proven himself the indie scene's preeminent folk songwriter, and that's "folk" in the way Alan Lomax envisioned it. It isn't hard to think of Mountain Goats records as field recordings, or even as occasional audio letters from a seldom-seen friend. I know pretty much what to expect from the vocals, guitar playing and basic songwriting, but I also know I can always expect him to say something interesting. And here are his two most recent documents. *Full Force Galesburg* is a collection of songs apparently inspired by traveling and "what made that moment either possible or inevitable, depending on how you look at it." As with 1996's *Nothing For Juice*, the songs are recorded in both lo-fi and studio formats, giving the CD an appropriate pasted-together format. It's John Darnielle immediately recorded these songs in the places where they were conceived. Also as on *Nothing For Juice*, Alastair Galbraith once again contributes his trademark violin to a few songs. John seems to have put the "Going To..." songs aside for now, choosing to just list the place names ("New Britain," "Ontario," "Minnesota") or listing specific periods of time ("Weekend In Western Illinois," "Evening In Stalingrad"). There isn't really a hit on the order of "Going to Georgia" or "Cubs In Five," but all 16 songs are rich with detail, observation and emotions laid bare, and as such makes for continually fascinating listening. The *Tropical Depression* single features three Mountain Goats tracks. "Anti-Music Song" is a reminder of just how funny John Darnielle can be when he gets worked up: "I saw you on TV/Trying to figure out what Brian Jones would be like if he lived 'til today/I can tell you myself: he'd be like Brian Wilson/I don't like Brian Wilson/ And I don't like you." Has anyone ever heard the "second-rate songwriter from the '80s called Marissi," though? "Going To Hungary" and "Earth Air Water Trees" are traveling songs with an Eastern European flavor: the former takes place in a Budapest motel room, and the latter proclaims love for someone "who gave me sausage and cheese when I was hungry." The Furniture Huschle side includes "Mercury Bobcat," a fiesta of wailing guitar and slowed-down backing vocals, and "Unforgivable Stuff," strongly reminiscent of John Davis' solo work. *(Emperor Jones, PO Box 49771, Austin, TX 78765; Little Mafia, 8204 Harvest Hills S. Blvd., Oklahoma City, OK 73132)*

NEW BAD THINGS
Ennui Go
Pop Secret CD

The New Bad Things capture that same mix of unhinged abandon and slow, moody moments that has brought albums like Neutral Milk Hotel's *On Avery Island* and Wimp Factor 14's *Ankle Deep* near to my heart. This Portland six-piece pulls together boom-box samples, lots and lots of drums, a bit of saxophone, and a sense of passion often lacking in the Standard Pop Song. Nay, despite their label's name—Pop Secret—to call this band "pop" would be wrong; the perfect pop song leaves me standing on a mental street corner, quietly watching the leaves blow by, while the New Bad Things make me feel like I've run through a lightening storm naked, and loved it. Standouts include "Over Me" and "One of these days," both rollicking and fun; "Misgiving," nearly a country-western ballad, but better; and the minute-long instrumental at the end of "Hey Lupe," a jumble of guitar and bass that mixes especially well loud and through headphones. *(P.O. Box 2203, Portland, OR 97208)* **-Tami Heaton**

ORANGE CAKE MIX FEATURING VERNA BROCK
"37 Shades of Blue" + 2
Tinseltones 7"

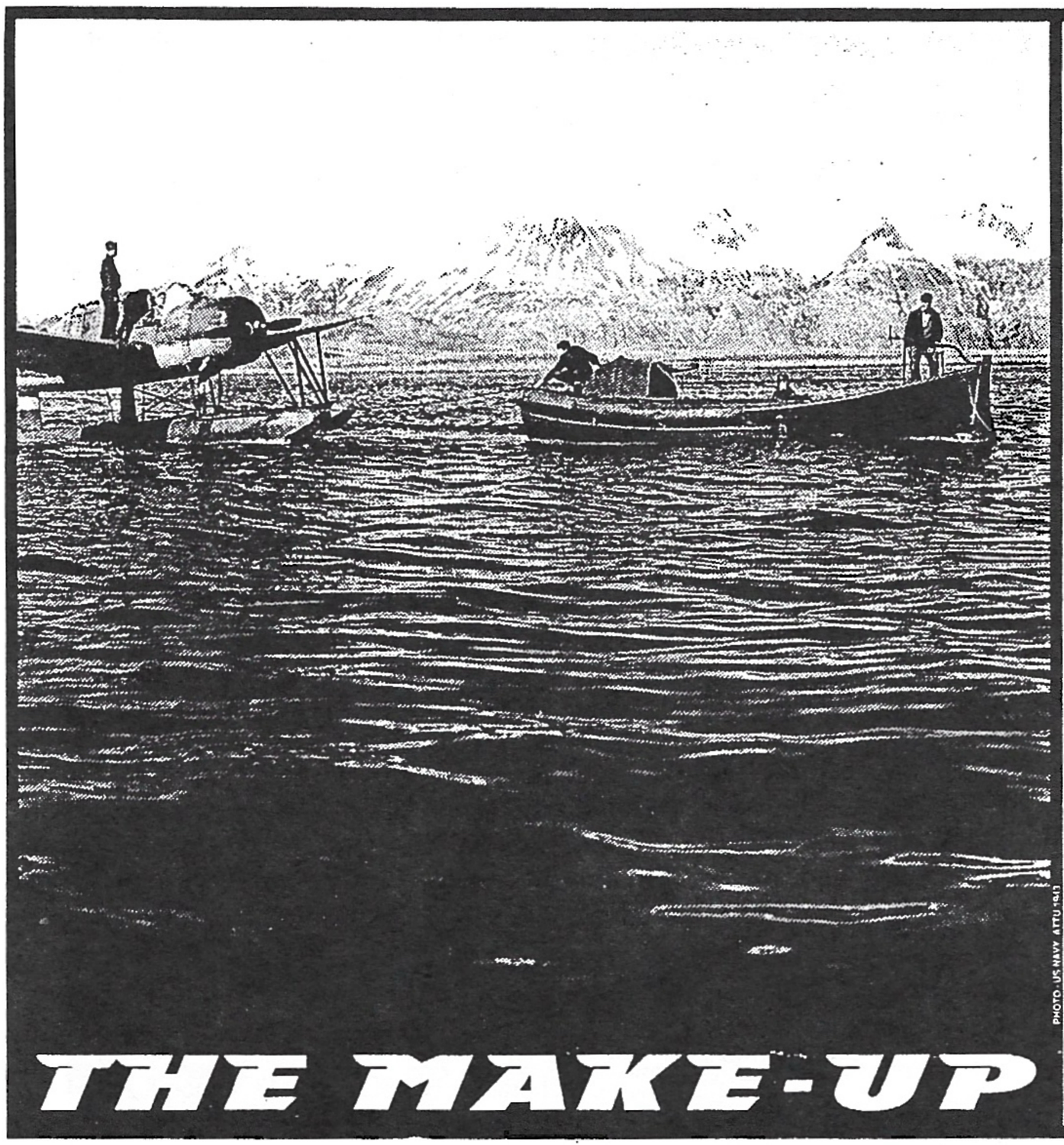
A long-distance collaboration between OCM's James Rao, who wrote the songs, and Beanpole's Verna Brock, who played flute and sang backing vocals. The result is very much in the echoey seaside pop vein of his Going Against Maz's Advice compilation tracks. (I haven't heard most of James' many other recordings, but apparently some are more White Town-ish in nature.) I especially like the off-kilter feel that Verna's flute lends to the title track. *(PO Box 7392, Kilmarnock KA1 4NS, Scotland)*

PENCIL TIN
A Gentle Hand to Guide You Along
Bus Stop CD

A comfortable companion to the recent Cat's Miaow compilation *A Kiss and a Cuddle*, this album, another of Bart's projects, is chock full of pop gems, all guitar and brush-tapped drums. Faster, a bit more frenetic than The Cat's Miaow, Pencil Tin miss some of the more tender moments that make TCM so absolutely heartbreaking: the memory of every swollen, whispered moment at the end of a bittersweet romance, the interplay of soft boy/girl dialogue. But this album is wonderful in its own way; there's a nice mix of tension and fluidity, and Bart's vocals echo with longing and a sense of past lost, a face at the window, a day spent walking the streets of a strange city, stones skipped on a lake. *(P.O. Box 3161, Iowa City, IA 522443161; or P.O. Box 1047, Brunswick MDC 3056, Australia)* **-Tami Heaton**

PULSARS
Almo CD

This CD never fails to give me the very pleasant hallucination that the year is 1986 and I am starring in my own private John Hughes film. (I always wanted to be Ally Sheedy, never Molly Ringwald.) The product of Chicago producer Dave Trumfio—of Kingsize Sound Labs and formerly the American contingent of Ashtray Boy—and his brother Harry, this album weaves the best of the '80s with a healthy



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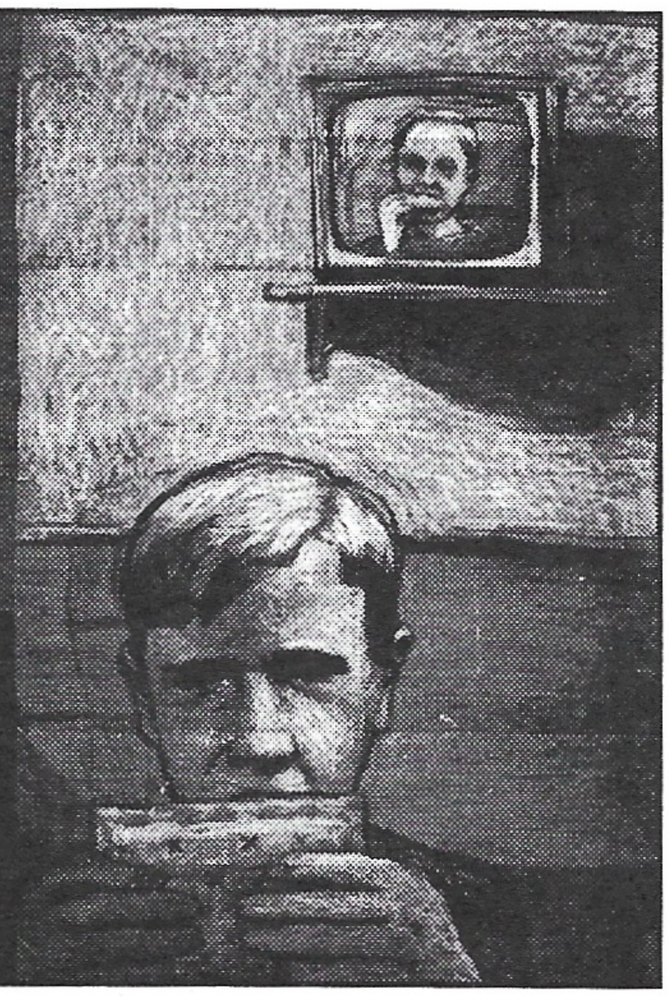

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dose of irony and '90s hindsight. It's what Romania could have been if they'd had a sense of humor: fantastic. The lyrics are sometimes on the silly side, but not always: Take "Owed to a Devil," a humorous look at the music industry, particularly in light of their signing with Almo (a subsidiary of BMG) after a fierce major-label bidding war: "So you say you wanna be a pop star/You'd better read my book 'cause you're my servant now/Kiss my pinky ring/I know it's hard, but I can make you sing like an angel." Also fantastic is "Lucky Day Part II," which makes me want to dance myself madly into the next century in the arms of Gordon Gano. The songs flow seamlessly one into the next, barely missing a beat, and I pine for teen rebellion and asymmetical haircuts. *(P.O. Box 148544, Chicago, IL 60614)* ***-Tami Heaton***

RED SLEEPING BEAUTY: *Soundtrack (Siesta CD)*
CLUB 8: *Nouvelle (Siesta CD)*

Red Sleeping Beauty dish up perfectly pleasant Swedish pop, but I honestly can't say it doesn't sound like supermarket Muzak of the upbeat variety. It's got that Muzak instrumentation—horns, flutes, keyboards—but if you're in the right mood, add cheerful boy/girl vocals and this will certainly hit *some* spot. The album's most heartfelt offering, "You're all there is," is a quiet, soulful, beautiful song with piano, a little bass, a little flute—intermitently spoiled by organ that belongs at a hockey game, not in a love song. (Somebody get the Zamboni!) If you're into the Swedish pop thing, be sure to check out Siesta labelmates Club 8, who in my opinion do it one better on their album *Nouvelle*: While essentially they're not much unlike Red Sleeping Beauty, they manage to be a bit more subtle, a bit more organic, more substantial. Especially nice is "She never calls me," less cloying, with male vocals and a slight '50s flair. *(Apdo. 8117, Madrid 28080, Spain)* ***-Tami Heaton***

SHOESTRINGS
Wishing on Planes
Le Grand Magistery CD

The third release on Matt Jacobson's Le Grand Magistery, this CD surprised me greatly after seeing Mario and Rose play in New York last winter. Live, it was just the two of them, singing quiet, contemplative love songs of the boy/girl variety. The CD is more full-bodied; smart, mature pop. Guitars electric and acoustic, bass, drum machines, keyboards of various flavors. Add Mario's soft vocals and Rose's lovely sigh of a voice, with plaintive lyrics and just a touch of New Wave, and you've got "Wishing on Planes." Wrap all this up and put it in some of the most thoughtful packaging I've seen in a while, and soon you'll find yourself wishing on them, too. *(P.O. Box 611, Bloomfield Hills, MI 48303)* ***-Tami Heaton***

SHOP ASSISTANTS
Will Anything Happen
Overground CD

Like last year's Dolly Mixture and Beat Happening reissues, this is an essential slice of history recovered. Guitarist David Keegan started Buba and the Shop Assistants as a solo project, recording one single with Stephen and Aggi from the Pastels that sounded very much like, erm, a Pastels side project. By the time he recruited bassist Sarah, vocalist Alex and drummers Laura and Ann, he'd shaved "Buba" off the band name and crafted a sound that was all their own – echoey production, unforgettable hooks, doubledrumming verve, cool female vocals, punk toughness tempered with pop sweetness. It was a sound familiar enough to get them play amongst Jesus and Mary Chain and the rest of the C86-era bands, but I'd argue that the Shop Assistants were among the most underrated of the C86 school. The fivepiece lineup recorded two dulcet singles, 1985's *Shopping Trolley* (on Subway) and 1986's "Somewhere In China" (on 53rd and 3rd) before ditching Ann, signing to Chrysalis, heading into the studio with Mayo Thompson, and recording a full-length album. Overground has been kind enough to reissue said LP, *Will Anything Happen*, throwing on the B-sides "Looking Back" and an alternate version of "All Day Long" as bonuses. The earlier singles are missing, probably for the ever-pesky licensing reasons.

For all the lingering influence of the Jesus & Mary Chain's *Psychocandy*, I've always contended that *Will Anything Happen* was a better album that should have had one-tenth the influence. These 16 songs alternate between fuzzed-out guitar sheets and rapid-fire drumming ("I Don't Wanna Be Friends With You," "Nature Lover," "All That Ever Mattered") and quieter, glistening but tense ballads ("Before I Wake," "All Of The Time"). It's never any less than great fun, with so many moments that still make my back tingle. Listening to this album more closely than I have in years, I realize that lots of the Shop Assistants' best songs were about turning away from a quiet, boring life and seeing the world for better or (usually) worse. *Shopping Trolley* contained "Switzerland," which contains some of the only harmonica feedback ever recorded (er, to my knownedge, at least). and *on Will Anything Happen* we have "Caledonian Road," a song about leaving for the big city only to have everything fuck up tragically ("Now you wake up cold on the bank of a river/Or you sleep in trains 'til they move you along"), "Home Again," about an uneventful trip to an old hometown ("How did you get here, same as before/A bus, a train and a short walk"), and a spectacular cover of the Shangri-Las' "Train from Kansas City." Then there's "Somewhere In China," quite simply one of the most beautiful songs I've ever heard. Over shimmery guitar chords and bells, Alex sings about missed opportunities, travel yearnings and airplanes: "She lives somewhere in China/I think that I'll go out and find her/Just to find out if there's a better world for me..." she sings before thinking about New York City instead by the time the soaring chorus comes around. Though I prefer the earlier single version, there's always something about this song that makes me misty-eyed every time I hear it. There are moments of abandon here, too. "I Don't Wanna Be Friends With You" contains some of the most over-thetop breakup lines ("I don't wanna be civilised/You leave me and I'll scratch your eyes out"), while the cover of Suzi Quatro's "What A Way To Die!" celebrates alcoholic stupor – it's always funny to hear Alex sing about drinking "17 bottles of Schlitz" in her Glaswegian accent. The album closes with the superfast "Nature Lover," a suicide note.

Alex left after this album to front Motorcycle Boy. The other three members reformed a few years later with Jesse Garon & the Desperadoes drummer Margarita, staying together long enough to record two fine singles, "Here It Comes" and "Big E Power." However, *Will Anything Happen* remains their essential work, and it's once again available for old and new generations alike. *(PO Box 1NW, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE99 1NW, UK)*

THE SOFTIES
Winter Pageant
K CD

Rose and Jen have made pretty much the same album three times in a row – two guitars, two voices, sad/reflective lyrics. I worry that it's beginning to wear a bit thin. There are, as usual, some excellent songs here – I'm partial to "Pack Your Things and Go," with its xylophone plinking away in the background, and "The Best Days," with the classic opening line "I wanted to see boats/So you took me to the sea." They're outnumbered, though, by the number of just-OK songs; at times I literally forget this record is playing. At their best, the Softies evoke the gentle, hushed feeling of a Wednesday-morning snowstorm, of drinking hot cocoa and lying in bed 'til the afternoon and not having to take the bus into work. But let's face it: they're

doing very little here that they didn't do as well or better on *It's Love*, or the "Loveseat" single for that matter. The Softies have definitely settled into a formula; while it's yielded some rewarding results, I just want more from them after awhile. *(PO Box 7154, Olympia, WA 98507)*

SOMETHING COOL: A CHER DOLL COMPILATION
various artists
Cher Doll CD

Lots of indiepop-related compilation CDs have come out in the past year or two, and *Something Cool* is one of the best. Nancy Ostrander has put together a near-perfect mix of veteran acts, new/unknown groups galore, and oneoff projects. There are almost no real weak moments, a refreshing lack of forced cuteness, a nice orange and green hues on the cover. Among the highlights: Rizzo's "Allie," a barely-two-minute burst that stuns like an early Tiger Trap single, all inspiration and harmony with a slow section in the middle. Beanpole's "Destination Unknown" (no, not the Missing Persons cover), is typical Verna Brock territory: scratchy electric guitar, high and winsome vocals, flute and percussion that sounds like a pencil hitting against a desk. The Autocollants' "Apple Vines" guides on sustained chords that remind me just slightly of Spent's quieter moments. Gaze offers the Spinanesy "Peeking Shows His Ignorance." Incredible Force of Junior, Sukpàtch and Orange Cake Mix all dabble in dancy textures, welding Casio keyboards and unassuming vocals to trip-hoppy beats. I find this to be a particularly appealing sound; Sukpatch's "Loaded Stinking Fimo" is particularly successful. Poundsign, Tullycraft (covering the 6ths' "Falling Out Of Love With You"), Suretoss and Schrasj also contribute excellent tracks...but my favorite of the bunch (next to Rizzo) is probably "99 Degrees" by the Sour Notes, who are Tanya Sullivan of the Receptionists and the Cups with friend and fellow Vassar student Sam Turner. Their "99 Degrees," all 1:40 of it, easily ranks with my favorite Receptionists songs, and the keyboard is a nice touch. Ret & Stare closes things with a dreamlike cover of Six Cents & Natalie's "Boyfriend." Ultimately *Something Cool* doesn't want to be a guide to 1997 indiepop as much as just a collection of Nancy's favorite bands. Her taste is impeccable and diverse enough to make this a solid listen all the way through. *(PO Box 23333, Seattle, WA 98102, nancyo23@scn.org)*

THE THREE PEEPS
Double Agent 45

This is a necessary 7" for any Softies fan; basically it *is* the Softies, acoustically and with the addition of Peter Green from Double Agent/Class. The recombination isn't bad. "My Heaven, My Sky," a standard song on the last Softies tour, is short and sweet, with boy/girl vocals and trademark Softies arrangement, quiet onenote guitar counterpoint running through the background like water. "My True Love" seems more Peter's song, an unrequited love number with a spoken bit by Rose at the end: "I'll be back to sing for you again, forever, you and me under the starry sky." A little cheesy, but well intended. And the cover of The Byrds' "Mr. Spaceman" is charming: Rose's vocals waver childlike against Peter's, and someone lets go a giggle midway through the "big" guitar solo. Get a copy while you can; I've heard they're on the verge of selling out. *(#3204, 188 E. 64th Street, New York, NY 10021)* ***-Tami Heaton***

TRUE LOVE ALWAYS
When Will You Be Mine
Teenbeat CD

A Charlottesville threepiece led by John Lindamann, who proved his grasp of jazzy chord progressions and crushed-out lyrics on the *Metastar* compilation cassette a couple of years back. *When Will You Be Mine* is a relaxed, sunny album with moments of tension (particularly in "Bicycle Rider," which has a Pylon feel to it). The obvious comparison is Unrest's later material, particularly in John's voice and the drumming, but there are also echoes of Felt, Honeybunch and Orange Juice hiding throughout. The perfect summer album. *(PO Box 3265, Arlington, VA 22203)*

TULLYCRAFT: "Heroes & Villains"
b/w RIZZO: "Rental Raccoon"
Harriet 7"

Tullycraft turns in a decent version of the Pooh Sticks' "Heroes & Villains," but you'll want this for Rizzo, one of those bands that makes the sheer act of playing music seem like the most fun thing in the world. Their song "Allie" was possibly the highlight of the *Something Cool* compilation; here, "Rental Raccoon" finds Jen and Sarah once again striking a similar pleasing balance between coyness and brashness. It even begins with a "Cool Schmool" style chant. *(PO Box 649, Cambridge, MA 02238)*

VEHICLE FLIPS:
"Ompompanoosuc" / "Sterling" *(WPTS/Numeric 7")*
"Terminus" / "Salad Bar" *(Harriet 7")*
"Impressed Beyond Belief" / "Formula Rejection Song" / "Citronella" *(Hemiola 7")*

Frank Boscoe, Vehicle Flips' lead singer and guitarist, is one of the indie world's underrated lyrical talents. He writes low-key, conversational rhyming prose about such subjects as geography, Walter Mitty-style tiny disappointments, and short trips to nowhere. They're full of detail, wit, sarcastic overstatement and, dare I say it, optimism in the face of mundanity. Very few indie songwriters are so adept at focusing in on small events (a garage sale, a missed flight, a lost pair of glasses at the Lounge Ax) and building them into significant metaphors. Vehicle Flips' song arrangements are sometimes a tad awkward, but these "flaws" fit perfectly with the people and situations contained within these songs. With this in mind, here's a trio of singles from Pittsburgh's finest. (There's another one on the Japanese Rover label that I haven't heard yet)

The WPTS single includes the wonderful "Ompompanoosuc," a singalong about making a wrong turn, missing an airplane flight and not really minding that much: "a thirty-dollar change fee on the plane ticket is a relative bargain no matter how you depict it." Frank's brother Paul provides nice, wholly fitting background vocals. "Sterling" is slower and sparser. The Harriet single features a blurry, sepia-toned snapshot of an empty train or bus station. It's one of the nicest-looking covers I've seen in awhile, and it nicely compliments "Terminus," about arriving early at the bus station after a trip, an entire suitcase full of "spectacular thrift-store finds," trying to get the courage to call an unspecified someone. The bass and drums keep dropping out and reappearing, perfectly evoking the confusion of arriving at a station without a clear path of what to do next. "Salad Bar" transports you to an exciting career at a Sizzler-type restaurant chain; the brochures promise "Here Meaningful Opportunities Exist!" and the potential low-level worker imagines himself at work: "Please place some fresh breadsticks onto the salad bar/O Employee Of The Decade." The Hemiola single features "Impressed Beyond Belief," possibly the catchiest Vehicle Flips song to date (love that "doo-doo-doo" chorus, almost reminiscent of "Sympathy For the Devil") and a song where that "optimism in the face of mundanity" theory idea comes into play. "Formula Rejection Song" is more about the *anticipation* of breaking up than the actual event, and the instrumental "Citronella" starts off harsh and freeform before settling into a mariachi-styled riff. Just three more seven-inch-sized slices of observation from this impressive band of long standing. *(band contact: PO Box 8170, Pittsburgh, PA 15217)*

Events

BREAKING THE WAVES
Written and Directed by Lars Von Trier

Breaking the Waves is a good film, but not a great one. I had heard only brief recommendations prior to seeing it, although I admit that a close friend's opinion that it was one of the best films he had ever seen raised my levels of expectations to heights that, perhaps, no film on that particular night was ever going to attain.

That it is a good film, though, is beyond argument. That it is a film which I actively thought about whilst and after watching is also beyond argument. But then, when the film was running, there was plenty of opportunity to think, given its length and low-key delivery. The low-key delivery was one which I welcomed for sure; the feeling that, with the yellow filter coloring and hand held camera, one was watching a home movie from the depths of the '70s was a delight. The length, however, was something which I found to be overly oppressive; intentional, perhaps, but on that night not what I was willing to deal with. It also left me feeling that *Breaking The Waves* was little more than a Religious Epic, and Religious Epic has never been my favorite cinematic genre.

One could say that it is to the film's credit, however, that it takes a Religious theme and plays with the rules, but again, I am unsure if this is strictly the case. Certainly it is a film which addresses squarely the conceptual clash of Organized Religion versus Personal Religion (or spirituality if you'd rather) in a straightforward manner, and although it makes no apologies for coming down wholeheartedly on the side of the latter, it seems that this very outcome is the expected and accepted point of view of the audience (inevitably middle classes with Interests In The Arts, or students of a similar bent). That the uniquely Personal nature of spiritual quest should be so heavily remarked upon by the clumsiness of the final scene was surely beyond a joke.

Nor did I find the characters to be of remarkable interest, which perhaps is no great criticism given the fact that the film's strongest point was its depiction of the nature of the everyday; the fact that everyday occurrences in any community are filled with variations of beauty, sadness and peculiarity that are often left unseen or unremarked upon. There were few, if any characters whom one was intended to feel anything approaching sympathy for, except for Bess perhaps, who, played by Emily Watson merely filled me with a vague irritation. Perhaps that was the point, but if so I think I missed it . Perhaps I wasn't being macroanalytical enough about it.

However, if we must be macroanalytical about things, a detail which I couldn't get out of my mind: the ring pulls on the cans of Tartan were the "modern" non-removable type, whereas they ought to have been the "old" type that you could pull completely off, and then break into two, using the flexible piece of metal to flick the finger ring across the classroom. Call me a can-spotter if you will, but such things are important when trying to present a "period" piece, yes/no?

I'll give it a 'good but not great' eight, Johnny. – *Alistair Fitchett*

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altyouth.media
The New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, N.Y., September-November, 1996
"Producing Your Own Zine" seminar: October 5th and 26th, 1996
(This fall, Caught In Flux *appeared in an exhibit of fanzines, video exhibits, photographs and other so-called "youth media" at the New Museum of Contemporary Art. The idea that I'd be in a museum seemed mysterious and flattering. In reality, the museum's curators weren't familiar with the small press scene and kinda botched the job. At least my mom was proud. I spent a Saturday afternoon at the museum teaching a class on "Producing Your Own Zine" with my good friends Barbara (*Plotz, Hey There, Barbie Girl!*) and Sabrina (*Bamboo Girl*) were involved, too. I'll let Barbara tell the story, as she's managed to capture the experience far more bluntly than I ever could. –m.a.)*

I'd be lying if I told you that I wasn't flattered (and flabbergasted!) when the New Museum contacted me and said that they wanted to put my zines in their museum exhibit. Wow – *Plotz* under plexiglass! Not to mention the banned-in-the-USA *Hey There, Barbie Girl!* The woman organizing the show, Melanie, sounded pretty cool too. She wasn't too knowledgeable about zines, but seemed very willing to learn more. I suggested some she should check out, and before I knew it, lots of zine pals were telling me also that they were going to be in this show. The only thing that sort of worried me was the title of the exhibit – altyouth.media. I mean, who am I kidding? I ain't no youth. But then again, neither were most of the zines in the show (shhh, don't tell anybody).

Melanie must have gotten really busy with organizing the show, as now a woman named Raina kept calling me (and calling and calling). She asked if I wanted to participate in some workshops on teaching kids how to make a zine. I was all over that action and asked if her if my pal Margarita from *Bamboo Girl* could participate also. She okayed the idea and told me that Mike from *CIF* and Jaina from *Flatter!* were also going to be "facilitating." Yay – no muss, no fuss and more importantly, NO EGOS!

I need to keep emphasizing that everything sounded too good to be true. Did I mention that we were being paid $100 a session as well? And if you scream that we sold out, let me tell you that we (like Donna Summer) worked hard for the money.

Which brings me to Session I. Mike and I had been speaking in preparation for this class in terms of what we were going to do. We really didn't have a clue, but we thought we should bring in issues of our favorite zines to show the class and then move on from there. So armed with our stash, we arrived at the museum ahead of time to purvey the exhibit and check out the kids. Well, the exhibit looked pretty good, although it was weird seeing zines mounted on the wall with "pull quotes" underneath them. It was even weirder that you couldn't *read* the zines which, to me, was sort of like the whole point anyway. *(ed: They actualy had the zines scattered about the room – you had to look for them, but they were there.)*

As we approached our work area, inconveniently located in the middle of the exhibit, I was not happy with what I saw. Basically, about nine people had gathered, all in their late 20s and early 30s. Hullo – altYOUTH.media? I should add that two genuine kids sauntered in late, but it was painfully apparent that their teachers forced them into coming and they left way before the session was over anyway.

But getting back to the group. Let me see if I can accurately break it down for you: 3 frat guys, a woman journalist there to just cover it for some magazine, 2 wannabe record exec types, an environmentalist and the 2 kids who bailed on us. And then there was Raina. She was the biggest pain in the ass of all. She was clocking us while we spoke! Stick-to-the-schedule regimentation does not a good workshop make. Especially with this bunch. None of these people even wanted to *create* anything. All they cared about was how much money we gleaned from our "enterprises." That had all of us laughing! The frat boys were also extra annoying because they kept talking throughout the whole session. (I'd actually like to formally apologize to all the teachers over the years I myself have been rude to for talking in class – I now know your pain!). But I guess what ticked me off the most was when those two perpetrating chicks stole my *Mystery Date* zine.

The actual zine-making was a joke, what with Raina counting the minutes and clapping her hands (figuratively) and the students sitting there full of lackluster. The wannabe girls were funny when they told me they wanted to do a zine "full of 1950s imagery." Gosh, that hadn't been done before, has it? The actual pages (each person was supposed to contribute a page to an overall zine that was to be a part of the New Museum when finished) were produced with a minimum of effort and looked like shit when they were done. The most appalling part was after everyone left (hurriedly, I might add) and Raina asked us to "judge" the pages that museumgoers had drawn up and left behind. I'd say that 99 percent of the pages were total shit. When I went to trash – er, *separate* – the good from the bad, Raina met me with daggers in her eyes. Seems that one of the pages I had discarded was done by "an

important artist" and she wanted to include it in the show. She must love crap cause it was sure stinking like that.

I should mention that Seth Friedman was in town and he stopped by the session. While it was good to see him answer questions and try to guide the class, the people didn't really seem to appreciate his knowledge of zine production.

At the end of the day Mike, Margarita and I left the show feeling pretty defeated. Were we really that naive to think this would be a worthwhile experience? Obviously. Mike was officially off the hook now, but Margarita and I had one more session to do two weeks later. Oy yoy yoy, can you say foreshadow?

Enter Jaina from *Flatter!* for Session Two. Now, Margarita and I were not too excited for this, but Jaina is someone who can make anything fun. We met up before the workshop for a quick knish and to plot some action. I was all about sabotage this time around! Instead we decided on "secret words" to incorporate into the afternoon's lecture. Hers was "sac," mine was "fisting." Ooh, the taboo of it all!

A sick sense of deja vu came over me as we entered the New Museum, but as soon as I saw that there were actual kids at the table, I felt relieved. And the evil Raina was nowhere in sight; instead it was Melanie, who was about 1000% cooler. There were still only about ten people who registered, but the age range was about 14-22. It was a totally different vibe this time; these kids hardly wanted to talk at all, they were prepped to work and came prepared with ideas. However, Jaina, Margarita and myself spoke for a brief time. I was a little apprehensive to mention "fisting," but when Jaina was talking about how "anyone could do a zine about any subject," I piped in with "Even about fisting?" She was cool as a cucumber and remarked with a straight face, "Why, yes, even about fisting, although I don't know what kind of distribution you could get for that." The class just laughed nervously.

And then they were off! Creating, asking advice, being open to ideas and helping each other – it was so beautiful. We all fell in love with one student named Jabari, who since the class has managed to create not one, but two issues of a zine called *Thunderpussy!* Phat props to him. The session ended with a paycheck and us exchanging addresses with the students.

The "real" zine world could take lessons from these kids. But I won't hold my breath for that to happen. – ***Barbara Plotz***

LONDON
November 9-15, 1996

What does it mean to wait your entire life to visit a place and then to suddenly find yourself there? I had about a week to ponder this question while in London. I avoided most of the tourist spots other than the morning I spent writing letters in a drafty Westminster Abbey corridor and walking past Parliament and Buckingham Palace. What I did for most of the week was walk for miles a day, take the underground everywhere, shop for records, interview early-80s musical idols, and see shows. That seems a little shallow now that I see it in print, like I didn't do nearly enough cultural things, but what the heck, I can always go back. Wait, I did go to Highgate Cemetery and saw Karl Marx's grave. His tombstone has this HUGE, scary sculpture of his head and the inscription "Workers Of The World Unite"; it gave me nightmares.

I managed to pick a good week for live music; in addition to the performances detailed below, I could have also seen the BMX Bandits, a Belle & Sebastian in-store at Rough Trade Covent Garden, and (if I'd been able to stay two more days) the Mountain Goats, a second Trembling Blue Stars show, and Fruit Machine. The following reports come more or less directly from my tour journal, with minor copy-editing and rewriting done.

TOM THUMB
The Dublin Castle, Camden Town
November 9, 1996

I spent my first night in London pub-crawling. Sheila, Darin and I went to several different spots, having a pint or two in each one. The only one I remember by name was the Spread Eagle, which Darin claimed was one of the Britpop scene's favorite watering holes. We didn't see anyone famous, although I saw what looked like three Bobby Gillespies, a couple of Gallagher sibs, a Justine Frischmann lookalike, and at least one Jarvis Cocker. Finally we ended up at the Dublin Castle, a dingy and crowded bar with an OK CD jukebox (it was kinda cool to hear "Gary Gilmore's Eyes" in London). There was a band playing in the back room; since Sheila knew the doorman, we got in for two pounds apiece. The combo on stage was a trio called Tom Thumb. All right! An authentic mediocre Britpop bar band! Most of their songs sounded vaguely like Oasis/Cast knockoffs, complete with cloying Beatle harmonies (except Tom Thumb's vocals were even more strained than Oasis's). I think one of the band members looked like either Rick Wakeman or Virgin chief Richard Branson. I think one of their songs was about how much it sucks to work at a day job. I think you should remember that I was drunk *and* jet-lagged, and that my memory counts for correspondingly little. There are two scenarios open to Tom Thumb, the way I see it: either they'll go nowhere and I'll remain one of the only Americans who ever has to hear them, or they'll pull a Bush and become obscenely huge Stateside. I vote for obscurity myself..

I did nothing else in London that could even remotely be considered "Britpop." I did see a huge Oasis display at the Virgin Megastore, though. And I saw a comedy sketch about the Gallagher brothers on "The Sunday Show" (the entertaining atrociousness of which is an article in itself).

LOW
TREMBLING BLUE STARS
SNOWPONY
The Underworld, Camden Town
November 10, 1996

The Underworld is located conveniently across the street from the Camden Town tube station. Actually, let me say a few words about the tubes before I dive into a show description, seeing as how I rode the things around for what felt like hours every day. Quite simply, the Underground rocks; it's preferable in almost every way to the New York subway system or the PATH train. The trains themselves are clean and safe, and run fairly close to on time. The stations are spotless and ordained, there are Cadbury candy machines everywhere (I took a particular shine to Time Out bars). Best of all, there are LED signs that tell you exactly when your train will be arriving (e.g. "Edgware 2 min"). Granted, sometimes those "2 min" can last a long time, but it's nice to at least be given an approximation. Most stations have these absurdly long escalators with extended lead-in and lead-off ramps, creating a moving-sidewalk effect that I missed back in America. And I liked the cool Underground logo, that famous red-circle-with-a-blue-line-through-it design. The only drawback to the tubes that I can think of are that they stop running at 1:00 a.m., but it's not as if there's that much to do in London at that hour anyway.

Snowpony consisted of Katharine Gifford (Stereolab, Moonshake) on vocals, Debbie Googe (My Bloody Valentine) on bass, and a drummer (from Quickspace, I believe). The guitars and percussion were piped in via backing tape. In her silver dress, Katharine looked a lot slinkier than she did on the Stereolab tours I saw. Snowpony played a pleasingly short set, kind of droney with heavy bass and a hint of dissonance. They were fine, although I found no real high or low points; one of the hazards of these kinds of all-star lineups is that they're often inferior to the band members' better-known projects.

The room cleared out a bit for the Trembling Blue Stars, which was fine with me; it just allowed me to move up to the front. The Trembling Blue Stars is, of course, Rob Wretton (he formerly of the Field Mice, the Yesterday Sky, and Northern Picture Library), with help from Harvey Williams. Rob's always been a master of sad, romantic songs, and *Her Handwriting*, TBS' debut album, is perhaps his best collection since *Coastal*. Tonight, Rob, Harvey and the bassist didn't introduce themselves or say anything in between songs; they just played about half a dozen brilliant and affecting songs. Their live sound was far closer to the Field Mice or Yesterday Sky than NPL, very organic and guitar-friendly. It was every bit as wonderful as I expected, and the small crowd seemed very appreciative. I hadn't had a chance to really absorb *Her Handwriting*, having only heard it once the week before at about

4:00 a.m., but was deadly impressed by everything they played. "Saffron, Beautiful and Brown-Eyed" was probably my favorite song of the set, one of the bitterest and truest breakup songs this side of vintage Mark Eitzel. When Rob sang "It's really easy to pretend things are fine/when really things are not fine," I thought of the breakup I'd had just before going on this trip and marveled at how very close the lyrics matched our farewell conversation. I feel extremely privileged to have finally seen this band, especially given how rarely Wretton performs live.

The Underworld crowded up again for Low. We stayed for about half of their set, who were slow, stately, elegiac, everything for which they're known. The crowd reacted in warm, polite fashion - no obnoxious talking over the band, which was nice. We ended the evening the same way I ended almost every evening in London: by riding the Northern Line to Hampstead, taking the escalator upstairs, and walking back to Sheila's flat through the quiet, well-kept streets in her neighborhood. It was about a 10-minute walk. In some ways, this nightly walk provided some of my favorite memories of the whole week, when I could fully absorb being in another country.

BELLE & SEBASTIAN
ARAB STRAP
The Borderline, Soho
November 11, 1996

I had never even heard of Belle & Sebastian before this week, but I'd been told that I *had* to see them while I was in town. So I headed to the Borderline, a vaguely Mexican-cantina-looking pub in a Soho cul-de-sac near the Tottenham Court Road tube station. While waiting in line, someone gave me a coupon for two pounds off admission; I bought a pint with my discount and wrote a couple of postcards while waiting for the show to start. I met several Indiepop List members at this show - most of whom, it turned out, had been at the Underworld the night before.

Openers Arab Strap had a vaguely irritated lead singer who bore a more than passing resemblance the Wedding Present's David Gedge. Most of their material failed to make much of an impression with me, and all the band members seemed pissed off at each other, which at least added some intrigue. The room was packed for Belle & Sebastian; I spotted Clare and Matt from Sarah/Shinkansen and all the surviving members of Heavenly, among others. The seven band members (guitar, bass, drums, two keyboardists, two violins) walked onstage, and the lead singer/guitarist softly began strumming "The State I Am In," a tense song at least partly about a gay boy falling in unrequited love. Gradually the rest of the band chimed in, and by the end the sound was powerful yet understated. Their long set was full of similarly strong material. I kept sensing a deceptive fragility, not unlike the late-60s Kinks, Trembling Blue Stars or even Tindersticks. In fact, some of Belle & Sebastian's prettiest songs were full of tumult and concern (the one I remember best was "Like Dylan In The Movies," a warning to a female friend to take care when she walks home late at night). It's just so rare to walk into a band's set cold and emerge feeling completely bowled over and pleasantly surprised. Quite frankly, I'd have to call this set one of the best surprises of 1996. If I'd known they were this good, I would have gone straight to their Rough Trade in-store appearance the day I got into England instead of taking a nap.

Epilogue: Judging from the live reviews I've read, this show was apparently important - the heralding of a bright new talent, the beginning of the end for lads' bands, that kind of thing. I've since heard Belle & Sebastian's two albums, *Tigermilk* and the quite remarkable *If You're Feeling Sinister*, as well as an EP, *Dog on Wheels,* and can recommend them wholeheartedly. So many of their songs are instant classics - "The State I Am In," "Dog on Wheels," "The Stars Of Track & Field," "Get Me Away, I'm Dying," the Holden Caulfield-esque "I Don't Love Anyone" - that it's startling. They're possibly playing in New York City later this year; expect to see me front and center.

HOLLY GOLIGHTLY
The Station Tavern, some dodgy part of town near Ladbroke Grove
November 13, 1996

I intended to see Holly Golightly play her weekly Wednesday-night gig, got on the train and everything. Unfortunately, there was a "security alert" in the Underground that night (which the paranoid American tourist in me interpreted as "bomb threat, we are all going to die now underneath the London streets"), and all the trains were pulled back into their originating stations and stopped indefinitely. And I wasn't completely confident in my ability to take the bus without getting lost. So I ended up back at Sheila's house watching *Never Mind The Buzzcocks*. My friend Dorian saw Holly a few months earlier, though. She said she was "scared" by the crowd (other than Holly, she was the only female there) and the Station Tavern's location, so maybe it's OK I didn't make it.

BIS
THE RAINCOATS
BUDGET GIRLS
London U.L.U.
November 14, 1996

I'd been looking forward to this show all week. Obviously I love the Raincoats, and I felt fortunate that they happened to be playing my last night in London. Bis were a far more complicated matter, one I approached with cautious curiosity. I'd been underwhelmed by their recordings to date. Sure, they had their moments - they were even fairly engaging, but in very specific moments only. That Bis was hyped beyond reason by the British press, fanzines and otherwise, didn't help. Perhaps I came to the three wee Scots with heightened expectations and felt frustration when their records fell short. I *wanted* to love them, and I kept hearing about what an amazing live band they were, but what was I to do with this information when all I had to go on was the records? So this was my chance to see what the fuss was about.

The show was in the student union at the University of London, in a fairly large multipurpose room. I ran into the Raincoats' Ana da Silva near the concession booth, and she introduced me to their longtime manager/fifth member Shirley O'Loughlin. I probably said

something embarrassing. I also met Natasha from *My Little Fanzine* (now *Take Me To Your Leader*), one of my very favorite British zines. She was wearing a sparkly dress and had glitter on her face. The Raincoats and Bis are her two favorite bands, and she and a friend had spent the past two weeks following the tour around the UK. I mentioned that I was on my way to Scotland the next morning. "Don't go to Dundee," Natasha warned me. "It's the kind of town where you're always expecting something bad to will happen." I bought a couple of OK zines at the Bis concession booth, *Silver Space Boots* and *Mass Murder on Jelly Babies*, and I traded a copy of *CIF* for the debut issue of *Pop Year Zero*, "The Teen-C Friendly Fanzine With A Nice Sexy Day-Glo Cover."

There was a huge cartoon drawing of Bis draped behind the stage. Sci-Fi Steven was drawn with an X-Large shirt, which makes perfect sense in light of their recent signing to Grand Royal. The Budget Girls were sloppy Headcoatish garage rock, featuring two madly singing/dancing American women backed by three guys in masks. The Raincoats played pretty much the same set I saw them do in NYC that September: they opened with "No One's Little Girl," closed with "Shouting Out Loud," and played songs from *Looking In The Shadows* in between. They are always wonderful to see, although their set tonight didn't quite scale the heights of their amazing show at NYC's Brownies (where they closed with "No Side To Fall In," "No Looking" and "Lola"!!).

Finally, Bis. From their first song, "Kill Yr Boyfriend," I understood what all the fuss was about. Their records were, quite simply, no preparation whatsoever the energy level of their performance. The three of them spent the whole set jumping around excitedly like they'd loaded up on sugared cereal while the Raincoats were playing. Songs from the 7"s were completely transformed onstage, especially "Kandy Pop," which took on several distinct levels of intensity live. It was almost endearing when they complimented us – twice! – on being "a very stylish audience." I had a blast seeing them, and it made me appreciate the records, too.

Epilogue: There were two kids in Bis t-shirts in Glasgow's Buchannan Bus Station the next afternoon. I have since seen the band half a dozen times and can now officially call myself a fan.

THE DANIELSON FAMILE

Other Music, New York, N.Y.
January 7, 1997

In the category of unique live spectacles, meet Danielson, the world's only Christian family indie-rock band. The six Smith siblings hail from Clarksboro, N.J., which is deep in Salem County near the end of the New Jersey Turnpike and the Delaware Memorial Bridge. It's about as close to *Deliverance* territory as anyplace else in the NJ wilds. As I walked in, the lead Danielson brother, Daniel Smith, was tuning his guitar and testing the microphones. A group of older people, probably parents and relatives, waited in one corner of the store near the Krautrock section. Then Daniel walked back out with his two sisters and three brothers, who seemed to range in age from 11 to 19. They were wearing matching white outfits with their names stitched in red on the shirts; the two sisters wore nurses' caps. Shades of Devo if Devo were performing at a talent show. The youngest Smith, Andrew, played percussion; the sisters, Rachel and Megan, played xylophone and tambourine/maracas respectively. They went into their first song, and Daniel sang his first words in a high, squeaky, spooky falsetto. His voice reminded me somewhat of Black Francis. In fact the music as a whole had an early Pixies feel to it, with hints of Pere Ubu and Red Krayola: frantically-strummed acoustic guitar, melodies suddenly interrupted by pregnant pauses, unpredictable veerings into slower territory, devices like rhythmic handclaps thrown in. I wondered whether the Smith siblings were *trying* to sound like the Pixies, or whether that's how it came out.

(Note: I later found out that Daniel graduated college in 1994, has a background in performance art, and once played in a goth band. He probably knows his source material, in other words. Which blows my theory that he just happened to stumble across this sound like Jandek or the Shaggs did, but it doesn't diminish my appreciation for the complexity of that sound.)

Megan and Rachel provided choreographed hand movements and dance routines to these difficult songs, as well as backing vocals. One tune ended with them and Daniel pretending to crack up laughing four times. It all seemed so wholesome; they probably are just nice kids from southern New Jersey, which of course pushed the music itself into a stranger realm.

The lyrics? Unless I was told they were Christian, I wouldn't have been able to pick out half of them, or maybe I would have just accepted the God references as poetic devices (see the Pixies again, who often combined the profane and the holy in a few lines). Sometimes it was overt: it's hard to ignore, for instance, the sight of three people singing "I-love-my-Lord, I-love-my-Lord, I-love-my-Lord," especially when two of them were clutching their hands to their heart and swaying in sync. But there seemed to be very little preaching, or maybe Daniel's vocal delivery was so off-beat that they were hidden.

Don't misunderstand: what Danielson does musically transcends novelty. They're far closer to Soul-Junk or DQE, two bands who overtly sing about their faith in God, than your average Christian coffeehouse propagandists. But their live performance was so tied up in anomaly that, quite frankly, it weirded me out. The matching outfits, their earnest and cheerful demeanor, the complicated music they played, the presence of their parents, the fact that it was all happening in Other Music, a record store that isn't known for its Christian Contemporary Music section...it was a complete break from the bands I usually see. It was like nothing else I will see for the rest of the year, that's for sure.

THE BOSTON POPFEST

The Middle East Upstairs, Cambridge, MA
May 3-4, 1997

Tami and I went up to Boston to play a Poconos show at the Middle East, opening up one of the Indiepop List's periodic weekend festivals. What follows is my recollection of the weekend, presented in the chronological style of Sonicnet.

Saturday, May 3

9:00 am: It is the fourth or so day that I haven't gotten enough sleep. I walk over to Enterprise Rent-A-Car in the pouring rain and pick up our transportation for the weekend, a red (not white for a change!) midsize Olds Achieva. I drive over to the apartment; Tami and I pack our guitars and clothing, pick up Callie six blocks away, and head toward New England.

11:20 am: A quick pitstop in New Haven, CT to pick up Steve Burt. He's standing on the corner with an umbrella in one hand and a cup of coffee in the other. We would've come directly to his door if he wanted to.

3:30 pm: It takes longer than we expect to get to Boston due to a combination of pouring rain and a couple of rest-stop layovers. We get slightly lost finding the Cambridge Susse Chalet, but finally locate it on Route 2 near the Alewife T station. Since we are so late, the cadre of New Yorkers also staying at the hotel have already headed back into the city. We figure maybe we'll run into them before the show, but we never do.

4:30-7:00 pm: Twisted Village Records and an extended coffee break at some dessert place in Harvard Square with our friend Jordan (he and Steve went to high school together; they are both hypersmart and both talk very fast). I am fairly nervous with anticipation this whole time, moreso as the popfest actually approaches. It will be only our second proper club show, and the first with stuff like soundchecks and a sizable audience.

7:00 pm: Arrive at the Middle East. We are among the first to show up; the Push Kings are sitting around the bar. We meet up with Jon Chaikin, who's helping us with things, and wait around while the Push Kings soundcheck. Then we soundcheck, and it isn't as scary as I figure it'll be. Afterwards, I run into my old friend Jackie Bascom, who I haven't seen in more than two years. She's flown in from Buffalo to see the show.

8:45 pm: Tami and I play, charging through our nine-song set in a little under 25 minutes. We don't make too many mistakes, and people seem to like us. We start off quiet and concentrated, saying very little in between songs. On "Central Station," our second-to-last song, I strum my guitar so

hard that two strings fall completely out of tune. I'm so full of adrenaline that I can't figure out which strings need retuning, so I play "Ten Hour Drive" with the guitar in its detuned state, trying hard not to hit those two strings. Jon tells me later he didn't even notice it. Tami and I summarily declare this the highlight of our short career as soon as we get offstage. I order a beer and chat with some friends from Boston and Connecticut that I don't see often enough.

I feel so, so strange for a couple of hours our set. I mean, actually playing the Middle East, perhaps my favorite club in the Northeast now that Maxwell's has changed management, with Honeybunch and ex-members of Small Factory? This isn't something I could have ever predicted.

9:15 pm: Flora Street seems a little darker and slower since the last time I saw them. I really like their set, which at its best contains echoes of the Nonpareils. It's Dave and Patti's last set as Flora Street, but Dave promises they will continue under a different name, perhaps with more instrument and songwriting switching.

9:45 pm: Jumprope plays. As usual, they are spirited and I feel guilty for not liking them more. It's beginning to get very hot and humid in the Middle East upstairs room, and Callie and I keep stepping in and out during their set and Permafrost's (a band that doesn't really do much for me with their rockstar moves and all).

11:30 pm: Ah, Honeybunch, a perennial favorite. Tonight they are playing with a keyboardist, which fills out their sound nicely. As usual, I stand in the front row, smiling throughout the whole set, smitten with this band and their songs.

12:00 am: The Push Kings close out the show. Their CD isn't something I listen to very often, and their live show has its cheesy elements, especially when singer/guitarist Finn grabs the mike and strikes poses. I don't know, I guess I wish they were more self-effacing sometimes. (Let it be said, however, that the band members are perfectly civil and friendly) Still, they are a lighthearted way to end the night, and I find myself actually getting into them in (very specific) places.

1:00 am: It takes literally an hour for everyone to get together and figure out post-show activities. Some of us want to head back to the hotel and get some sleep; others want to go get food or go to a bar. The bulk of us finally decide to head to the Susse Chalet. Tami, Andrea Goldstein, Steve, Callie and I go to sleep. In the other room, several people decide to head out to a 7-11 for food and drink; they end up getting hopelessly lost in the greater Boston area and don't return to their room 'til 7:00 am.

Sunday, May 4

8:15am: Jill Bliss knocks on our door for Andrea, and they head to Dollar-A-Pound at the Garment District. I am temporarily disappointed that no one told me about it, but then look on the bright side: I can stay in bed for awhile longer.

11:00 am: Showers, packing up, checking out, and back in the car toward Cambridge. We eat brunch at Cafe Soho and spend the day wandering around the city. There is the requisite record shopping at In Your Ear, Pipeline and Newbury Comics. Callie heads to the Wordsworth children's book store for awhile while Tami and I browse through Newbury's oft-surprising used-singles section. My find of the day is a Melons' 7" for 99 cents. We introduce Tami to Smarties, an excellent British candy similar to M&Ms but way, way better. Later in the day we meet up with Jordan again, and he and Steve give us a detailed tour of the Harvard campus. By late afternoon we are all tired from all the walking, but it's a good, satisfying sort of tired.

7:00 pm: Back to the Middle East for dinner and the second half of the popfest. WHRB DJ Sloan meets up with us for falafel, and one by one the show's organizers and participants show up. The plan is to stay for the first four bands and hit the road in time for work and to return the rental car. Tonight's show is far less hectic than Saturday's; much of the NY crew has already left for home.

8:30 pm: Ribbon Candy strike me as a spirited but kinda ordinary band. I am not moved by their songs about marzipan and Billy Bragg. Later I find I'm the only person I know who didn't like them.

9:10 pm: Names for Pebbles hit an excellent Boyracer/Weddoes-styled pop buzz. I enjoy their concise set thoroughly.

9:50 pm: Hushpad is just Matt pouring his heart out onstage. It's a fairly stark, solitary, lonely set, one that I appreciate very much. Especially liked that "Goodbye Virginia" song.

10:30 pm: Our popfest experience ends in a smily way with Connecticut perennials Musical Chairs, a band that doesn't play out or record enough. It's always an event to see them play, in other words, and they were especially good tonight. Ian has added a second guitarist to his lineup which fills their sound out nicely.

11:10 pm: Some of us want to stay for My Favorite (including Callie, who'd been talking librarian shoptalk with Andrea Vaughn), but we're all getting tired and need to hit the road. By 11:30, we say our goodbyes and find our way to the Mass Pike.

2:00 am: I apparently sleep through Tami almost running off the road. We drop Steve off in New Haven and I take over the wheel for the final stretch. After a quick gas/Coke break at a rest stop, we're off.

4:00 am: The late evening seems so incredibly peaceful; the sky is still a couple of hours from brightening. Callie and I talk while Tami and Kardyhm sleep in the back seat. We drop Kardyhm off in Hastings-on-Hudson.

4:45 am: Down the Saw Mill Parkway which turns into the Henry Hudson Parkway. Through the Holland Tunnel. Over the bridge, a left onto 14th St., a right onto Garden Street. We are home. We drop Callie off, find a parking space for the car and go to sleep.

7:45 am: I wake up to return the car. My entire body feels weighed down from exhaustion. Work isn't even an option by this point, so I call in sick, return the car and sleep all day.

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Spiral Jetty's first show in three years, June 1, 1997.

SPIRAL JETTY
THE LOVED ONES
"Budapalooza"
New Brunswick Hungarian Festival, New Brunswick, N.J.
June 1, 1997

"Nostalgia is a terrible thing:" so warned Pussy Galore. I don't categorically agree, but nostalgia can be awfully hit-or-miss. Like today, for instance.

In the mid- to late-1980s, Spiral Jetty were the best band in New Brunswick, N.J. They happened to hit town right when a brief local music boom was happening, quickly establishing themselves as one of the more original groups in town. Their early albums, 1986's *Tour of Homes* and 1987's *Art's Sand Bar*, found them mining the nervous energy of the Talking Heads, Modern Lovers and the Feelies (Glenn Mercer and Bill Million even produced *Tour of Homes*). Later they drifted into almost Neil Youngish territory, which is captured on two uneven albums, 1988's *Dogstar* and 1994's posthumous *Coat of Hair*. Spiral Jetty toured throughout the Northeast and built up something of a regional following, but you really had to hang around New Brunswick to understand their significance. For what made Spiral Jetty such a special band to us locals wasn't just their music (though they've written their share of unknown classics: "Big Downhill Racing," "Andy's Attic," "Social Age," "Lucinda") – they were our friends, classmates, drinking partners, fellow college radio DJs, party hosts. In short, they were everything a good local band should be, and around them a community of fans and friends converged. Every month or two they'd play long, sweaty sets at the Court Tavern, usually having a good out-of-town band opening up for them. I'd stay until the traditional set-closer "Hey Joe" (an original), customarily thrashing around with everyone else, and then there would usually be a party at drummer Dave Reynolds' house on Monument Street downtown. These were usually all-night affairs, not least because you had to stay until the alcohol wore off enough to drive home. I would readily consider these some of the best nights of my life. It's hard for me to think of Spiral Jetty without also thinking of the community that surrounded them; there were certain people I only saw at their shows. When the band broke up in 1990, it the last time I saw some of these people.

Whatever became of Spiral Jetty? Bassist Andy Gesner remains musically active with the Urchins and Loved Ones. Drummer Dave Reynolds plays in the Urchins and attends college (or at least he did until recently). Lead singer/guitarist Adam Potkay moved to Williamsburg, VA to pursue his academic career, although for the past year he's been taking a sabbatical in New Jersey. Spiral Jetty played one reunion show at the Court Tavern in 1993, which was very much a band AND audience reunion. But since Adam's been back in the area, he's gotten together with Andy and Dave. They played several gigs as the New Tellers, but never as Spiral Jetty – at least not until this summer, when they scheduled a series of shows under their original name. The first was at "Budapalooza," an all-day outdoor show that was part of New Brunswick's annual Hungarian festival.

I went with friend Jules Herbert, whom I've known since college and who moved to Hoboken last year. On the way down, we talked about all the people we knew from college who still lived in town and who we hoped might be there. I have to admit I felt like I was returning to my high school reunion or something. We parked on Guilden Street and moved through the street fair, which was still getting going at 12 noon. "Budapalooza" was happening in the parking lot of the Budapest Cocktail Lounge, apparently the new local hotspot. Quite honestly, the place looked like it stood in disrepair for 30 years until they started booking bands – it's just as divey as the Court, which is to say in a somewhat ramshackle, unappealing way. And most of the bands I'd actually heard on this all-day bill – Bad Karma, Boss Jim Gettys, Bionic Rhoda – seemed very much in that New Brunswick cliched rock vein. When will people in this town face the '90s? (It's no wonder to me that Grit, Slow Children Playing, Azucar and the rest of the Model Rocket/Jiffy Boy/Sweet Baboo-affiliated bands avoided the local bar circuit like the plague. They provided the city with some of its only truly original music this decade, but most of the locals considered them art fags, and they in turn considered the locals old and pathetic. Now they're all gone).

I suppose I expected another old-school love-in. Instead Spiral Jetty set up to a sparse audience of ugly townies, random curiosity-seekers who happened to be at the Hungarian Festival anyway, and people I didn't know. Other than Jules and our friend Denise, virtually none of the old fans were here. Where was Brian Racek? Where was Tom, their soundman? Was it just too early, or was everyone waiting for the evening bar shows later in the summer? Undaunted, Spiral Jetty kicked into "Lucinda," one of their very best songs that, sadly, they never recorded (but apparently they're finally going into the studio this summer to lay it down), and followed it with a smattering of past glories: "All of This," "Baltimore," "Andy's Attic," "Coat of Hair," "Exactly How She Feels." There was a new song, a catchy number which thankfully eschewed the horrible heavy-handedness of *Band of Gold*, and a cover of Jonathan Richman's "Affection." A few more songs followed, all played well and enthusiastically...but every time I looked over at the disinterested, motley audience, I just got depressed. Where *was* everyone?

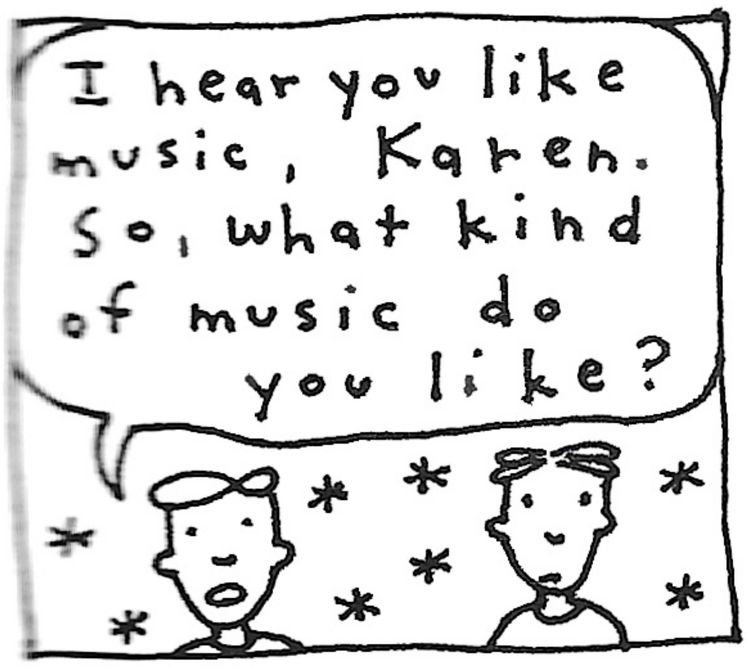
They closed with "Hey Joe," the same as always. We stayed for the Loved Ones, an innocuous four-piece that plays at bars, coffeehouses, Borders Books shops and similar places. There are worse bands in the world: Robin Renee's got a powerful voice, some of their originals are OK, and (just to give their show some absurdity) their drummer used to be in Nektar of all things. Not something I'd rabidly recommend, but good-for-what-it-is. Then we went to get some Hungarian food, wander around the booths for awhile, and head back to our regularly scheduled present-day lives. I should know by now how unpredictable these time-travel experiences are.

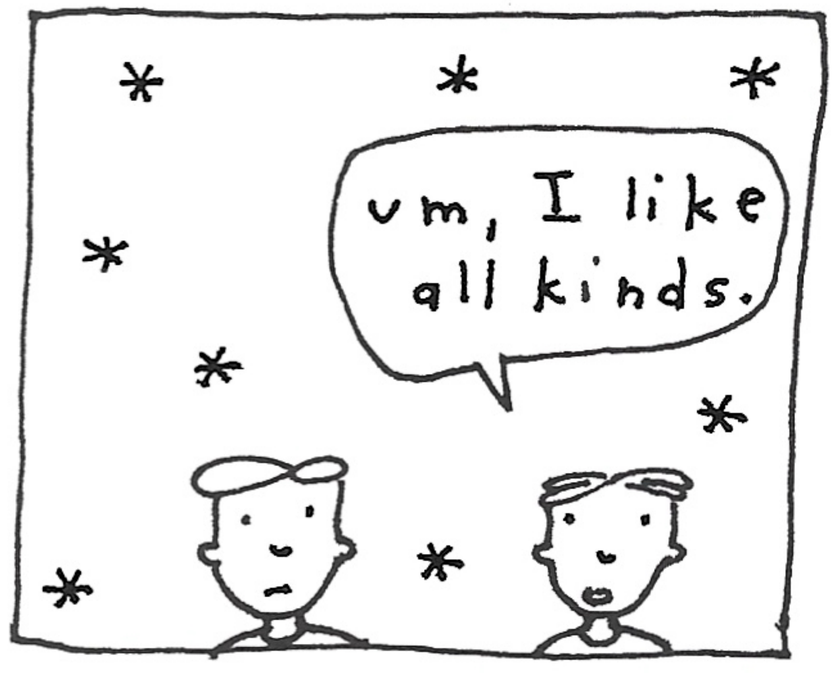
KENICKIE
The Mercury Lounge, New York, N.Y.
June 6, 1997

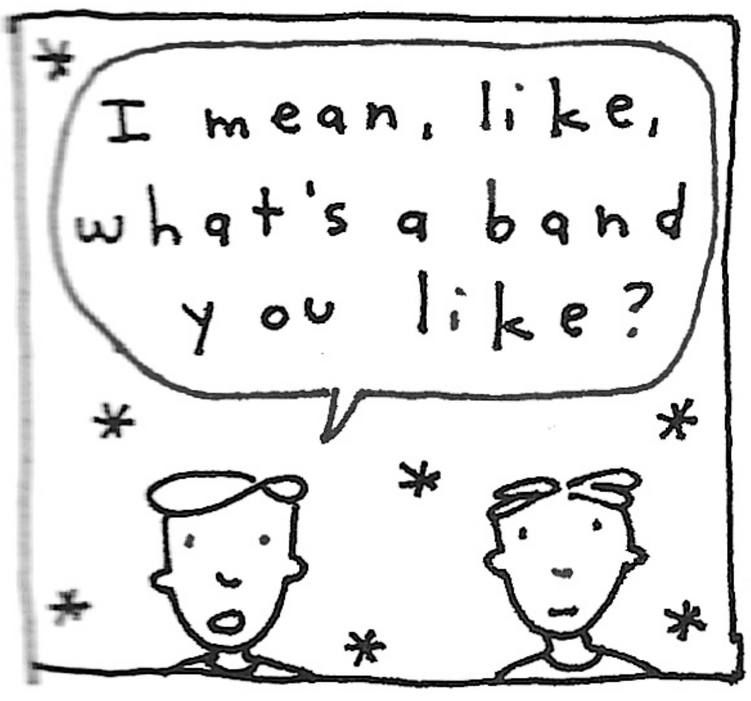
Kenickie started life as members of the Slampt roster. As soon as they were able, they signed to EMI, prevented Slampt from pressing their single, blasted their former label in the ascerbic "Punka," and in the process apparently become quite famous in the UK. At their debut New York appearance, there were more roadies and guitar techs than actual band members, not a good sign at a club that holds under 200. Their onstage banter was hilarious – I especially liked the part when three of them were talking at once about different things – but their attitude of "here we are, love us, make us rich!" eventually grew pompous and wore me down.

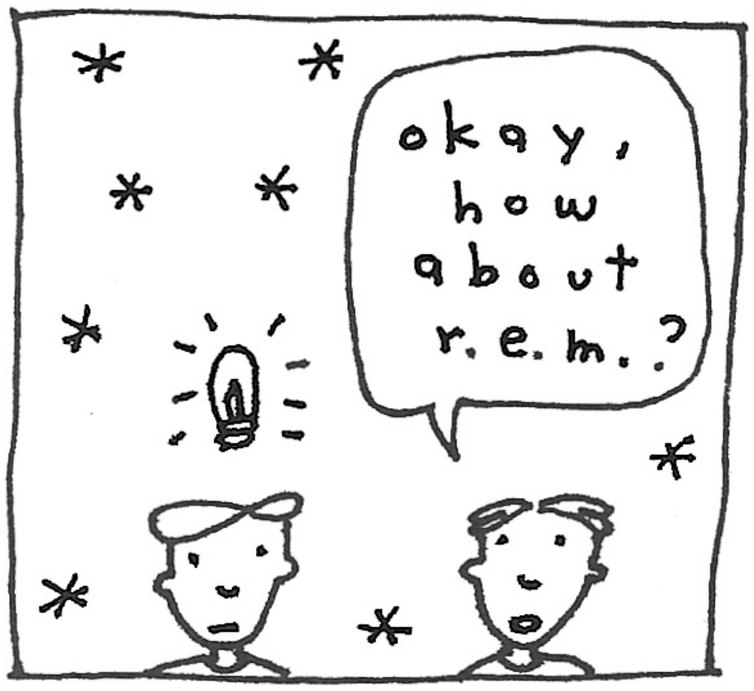
the eternal quandary of the musically obscure

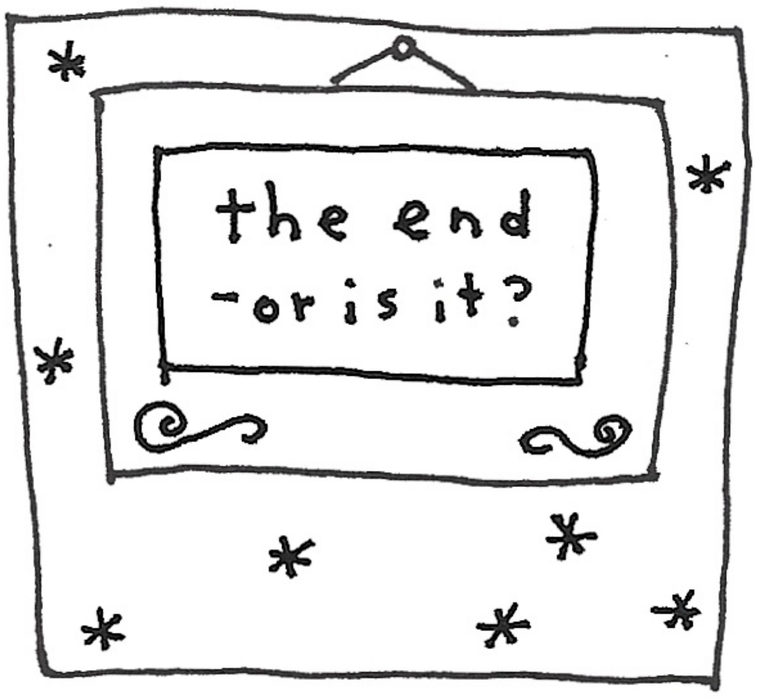
mise en scène by KAREN











Caught In Flux
P.O. Box 7088
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U.S.A.

Thames River, London

Tuesday morning, November 12, 1996